F. F. Thompson

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OF
THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE

XPERIMENTS IN PERSONAL RELIGION

BY

DWARD SCRIBNER AMES
ILLIAM C. BOWER
EORGIA L. CHAMBERLIN
HAILER MATHEWS
DONALD W. RIDDLE
GERALD BIRNEY SMITH
THEODORE G. SOARES
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AN OUTLINE STUDY COURSE

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EDITORIAL NOTE

This course is presented through the co-operation of nine scholars and teachers. Its fourfold purpose is to help people to think more clearly concerning the nature and function of religion, to quicken their powers of observation in their customary contacts with the religious life of others, to cultivate skill in the evaluation of the results of observation, and to foster a deeper religious life in themselves and others.

While the authors have all co-operated, the division of work has been quite distinct. The survey based on character studies and historical appreciation has in each case been given by a different author, whose name appears in a footnote on the first page of the study. The second portion of each study has been provided by Professor Henry N. Wieman as a series of proposed experiments growing out of the subjects under consideration. The Table of Contents will show just which pages of each study are contributed by each man. This experimental method distinguishes this course from any other of the Institute courses.

The eight studies were printed serially in the INSTITUTE for 1927–28 and followed by several thousand persons with great interest. Arrangements have been made for a series of suggestions to those who desire to report for criticism upon their work. Information concerning this feature may be had by those who desire it upon application to the headquarters of the American Institute of Sacred Literature. For thousands, however, the course as printed in this book will be sufficient.

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Any person who has conscientiously followed the instructions of this course may send in answers to the questions following each month's work and receive a certificate for the course.

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Study I[1]

Religious Experience through the Outer World of Nature

I. *Introduction*

Religion is more than beliefs which religious people hold. That there should be beliefs, of course, is inevitable. Just as people's political theories are embodied in states and governments, so their beliefs about religion are embodied in their religious experience and religious institutions. But it cannot be too clearly seen that religion itself is more than any philosophy of religion, just as hunger is more than any treatise on physiology or diet. It is a phase of the life-process itself in which men seek to set up friendly relations and get help and protection from those superhuman forces upon which they feel themselves dependent. It is as characteristic of humanity as language or the use of tools.

The beginning of this religious experience is like the beginnings of cooking and agricultural practices, hidden in the mists of prehistoric times. That primitive men felt the mystery which surrounded them and sought to make the forces within it friendly is evidenced by such few remains as they have left us, but even more clearly by the attitudes and practices of the most primitive races which have been studied. "Fear made the gods," said the old Roman philosopher, and there is a measure of truth in the saying, but religion is older than any theory of the deity. It was man's response to a sense of need of help and guidance, in a world he did not understand.

Imagine yourself living in a world where there was no science nor literature nor civilization. What would be your feelings if you saw a thunderstorm coming down upon you, and saw some trees struck by lightning near the mouth of the cave in which you lived? Or suppose that after you had found you could store up the fruit of certain grasses you suddenly saw them ruined by the overflow of a river; or suppose you had come to observe how light came with the sun, and darkness when the sun disappeared, or that you had managed to live through a long winter,

[1] The following persons have co-operated in the preparation of this study: Dr Shailer Mathews, Professor H. N. Wieman, and Miss G. L. Chamberlin (see Table of Contents).

and one day found that not only the days were growing longer but that vegetation was once more springing up. Would you not feel that you were in the grip of mysterious forces about which you knew nothing, but which you felt that you must placate, that is to say, treat them as you would one of your wild neighbors whom you would not wish to do you injury?

In some such attitude of wonder and desire for help, religious experience is built. Men's sense of need, their efforts to meet those needs with the aid of powers more than human, the satisfaction and gratitude which they felt, when in answer to their gifts or prayer such help came, were a part of the human history as long as men have existed. Sometimes men prayed directly to the sun, or the rain, or the river. Sometimes they thought that in these mighty objects as well as others that seemed to have some influence over their lives dwelt a spirit, something like the spirit that was in human life, but always, if we may judge from ancient literature and ancient religious practices, they found themselves fearing and trusting and thanking powers they saw or thought they saw in nature. Many a century had to pass before they could think clearly about these experiences, or find a rational ground for employing them and furthering them, but long before there was any theology or even priestly cults there was the outgoing of the human spirit in quest of help from the mysterious and uncontrollable forces of nature.

We who live in these days of scientific experiment and far-reaching philosophy are likely to regard such attitudes of primitive races as superstitions, but that is because we overlook elements in our own lives which are of the same sort. What man has stood alone by the side of the ocean without a feeling of awe, and a sense of the immeasurable? Or who ever sat quietly on some mountain peak before the vast expanse of mountain and plain without a similar feeling of awe, and a new experience of beauty? Poets have expressed this experience more beautifully than others, but nature has always the power to arouse emotions which are uplifting.

Whatever may be our philosophy or our theology, nature stimulates an experience which is truly religious. There are those who see in this experience the presence of a personal God. Others see creative evolution, or reason, or intelligible activity, but to all comes experience which satisfies the deepest longing, and awakens the profoundest emotions. It is only when we do not dare trust the experience itself, and seek to explain it by our own limited knowledge and power of thought, that doubts arise. They may be legitimate or they may be unwarranted, but if the testimony of men from all classes of life and all periods of history is to be

trusted, this sense of reverence, this desire to co-operate with the forces of nature through the agencies of one's own personality, is genuine.

II. *Illustrations from the Bible*[1]

The Bible abounds in illustrations of the way in which men were stimulated to religious faith and thankfulness by nature. The knowledge of science possessed by the ancients was indeed small compared to that of today, but they were none the less sensitive to the universe in the midst of which they lived. It may be that their very inability to classify and explain great natural phenomena like storms, earthquakes, heavenly bodies, seas, all the more readily evoked from them that attitude of reverence and gratitude which characterized all religious experience.

Perhaps as early a reference as any to the religious interpretation of nature is to be found in the story of the rainbow presented in the covenant with Noah, Gen. 9:8–17. It is to be a sign of God's fidelity, and his interest in man. There is never to be another flood and the seasons will come and go in regular order.

In the accounts of the early struggles of the Hebrews with their enemies, there is constant reference to the help given by Jehovah through natural forces. A striking and beautiful expression of this faith is to be found in the Song of Deborah which celebrates the victory of the Hebrews over the Canaanites in the midst of a great storm which made the plain of Esdraelon impassable for Syrian chariots. Read Judg. 5:1–31, noting especially verses 2–5, 19–23.

The ancient Hebrews reverenced the trees. They made their homes near them and built their altars beside them. This was not alone for comfort, but because these trees gave to them a sense of the presence of God. Read Gen. 13:18; 18:1; Judg. 6:11; 4:4. The mystery of water and the reverence and gratitude inspired by it was a common but not less real source of religious experience to the interpreters of nature in the Bible. Read Num. 20:2–13; 21:17, 18. Anything so "providential" as the finding of water, running from a rock, or by digging in the earth, was an awe-inspiring thing and a symptom of Jehovah's approval.

The stories of Elijah testify to the influence of sensitivity to nature upon spiritual growth. Read I Kings 18:1—19:14. Note that the story is based upon the idea that drought is a punishment from Jehovah, and that the breaking of the drought comes through the intercession of a prophet of Jehovah, and a changed attitude on the part of the people.

[1] If at all possible use the American Standard Revised Version or one of the new translations such as that of Moffatt, or the *American Translation*, by Professor John M. Powis Smith and others.

But the manifestations of fire and the coming of the rain were not sufficient to save Elijah from spiritual collapse. After the experience of a storm, with rent mountains and crashing rocks, a voice speaking to the soul of the man recalls the needs of the situation from which he fled, and rouses his courage again to action. These were all profound religious experiences.

As culture developed among the Hebrew people their thought of the heavens and the earth as expressions of the will of God became very marked. This is especially evident in their religious poetry. Read Ps. 8 and note how the Psalmist's praise and gratitude is called forth as he considers the honor and dignity bestowed upon mankind and compares man with the majesty of the natural world. Read also Ps. 19:1–6.

Read Ps. 29 and note the wondering gratitude and praise to which the poet gives expression as he seems to describe the phenomena attending a great electric storm, but observe that he interprets this marvel solely as an expression of divine presence and power and has no interest in it from the scientific point of view.

Read Ps. 93. Here again the inspiration which is gained from a great storm or from a vision of the sea leads directly to praise to Jehovah for the majesty of his reign over the world.

Read Ps. 96, particularly verses 11, 12, 13, where the poetic imagination rises to the splendid height of conceiving the whole physical universe as joining in a mighty chorus of praise to God. Read also Ps. 98.

The creation psalms, 104, 139, are full of religious feeling rising out of thought about nature's great mysteries, which could find expression only in the most exalted poetic speech.

Many of the *prophets* have left us evidences of deep experience of their communion with Jehovah, inspired by the thought of his creative power, or his use of nature in disciplining his own people. Read Amos 4:6–12.

The whole Book of Joel is inspired by a terrible visitation of locusts accompanied by a drought. As the prophet gazes upon the sufferings of his people he voices his own experience of God's wrath, in the terror of the devastated vineyards, the destruction of crops, the pollution of the streams, the rigors of the famine, but above all in the lack of material for the necessary offerings to Jehovah. But he rises above all these material things and points to the days of temporal and spiritual glory which shall follow.

The writers of Isaiah, chapters 40–66, are led through their fresh confidence in God's creative energy, and his power over nature, to faith in his will to deliver his people from exile, and to establish them again in

Palestine where they may become the religious leaders of the world. Read chapter 40, also 42:1–17; 43:18–21; 45:6, 7, 18, 19. Only out of his own great experience of God could the prophet speak thus.

In the Book of Job the sense of the greatness and awfulness of God is always present when Job speaks. Out from this feeling comes the tragic problem which suffering suggests. Why should such suffering exist if God is at once just and all powerful? Such difficulties are not so poignant in the theories of those who have not reached the heights of monotheism. In their case the inability of a God to control nature may be due to the operation of some Fate or Force which is superior to the gods themselves. Such was the mythology of the world of Greece and Rome. But when, as in the poem of Job, nature is an expression of the creative power of God, and its continued existence is due to his providence, the misfortunes which come upon good people constitute a genuine problem. Yet Job finds the answer to his problem in the thought of God himself. His power is so great as to lie quite beyond human comprehension, and in the magnificent speeches with which the book closes, 38:4–42:6, Job reveals at once a reverent agnosticism and a childlike faith in the power of God in nature and human destiny.

In the religion of Jesus there was to him the unfailing sense of the presence and activity of God in all nature's phenomena, and he counted upon it. The habit of communion with God through nature led him to frequent use of common, everyday observations of nature in illustrating the love of God. He tells men to consider the birds and the flowers and to have faith in the care of the heavenly Father, Matt. 6:28–34; 10:29, 30; Luke 12:22–32. Here, as in all of Jesus' teaching, he attempts to convince men that all human experience argues that divine love can be discovered and trusted.

He sees also in the processes of nature analogies of the spiritual life. When he looked upon the sower he was reminded of his own sowing of the seed of spiritual truth, Matt. 13:2–10, and was encouraged by the fact that while much seed was lost some took root. When he wandered among the flocks upon the hillsides he felt the thrill of the responsibility of his own shepherding of the heavenly Father's sheep, even to the rescue of the lamb that was lost, John 10:11–16. When he saw the mustard tree, he recalled the tiny seed from which it had sprung; the loaf of wholesome bread reminded him of the bit of leaven which had given it life, and both these suggested to him confidence in the ultimate success of the Kingdom of God, and its ministry to the welfare of all mankind, Matt. 13:31–33. As he watched the tares growing side by side with the wheat he was moved with indignation and a sense of injustice, but the spiritual

satisfaction lay in the knowledge that these tares could not indefinitely masquerade as wheat. Just so in the spiritual realm would justice be done, and the "wolves in sheeps' clothing" be discovered and punished.

So constant was this spiritual response of Jesus to the common life of the countryside that as one reads the gospels sympathetically, he feels within himself a new response to nature and a new tendency to interpret spiritually her purposeful activities.

When Jesus himself was in spiritual conflict and desired communion with his heavenly Father, he retired to a mountain alone to pray and received new inspiration from it, Luke 9:28–43; Mark 8:31—9:8. Nor can we overlook the fact that his great moment of self-mastery (which we commonly call the "Temptation") came when he had been driven by spiritual agitation into the wilderness where he might be alone with God, and that in that solitude he adjusted his life to a new sense of duty and power. Read Matt. 4:1–23.

While to the prophets the catastrophic in nature made its strongest religious appeal, suggesting a God of power and passion, to Jesus the silent, daily, unnoticed because so common, operations of nature suggested the patient daily nurture and benevolent care of a heavenly Father in whose never ceasing activity he rejoiced, John 5:17.

Nature does not play the same rôle in the thought of the early Christians as in that of the Old Testament or of Jesus. Their analogies are drawn almost entirely from human experience. There is no longer any question as to the power of God, but men are urged to accept him as a king. Yet even Paul will say, Rom. 1:19–32, that the sins of the heathen world were due to its failure to realize the presence of God, in a universe where his deity can be argued from nature itself.

Nor is it pushing the inferences drawn from his own account of his conversion too far to conjecture that when he left Damascus to go into Arabia he deliberately chose the solitude of the open spaces rather than the crowds of the city, Gal. 1:11–17.

III. *An Illustration from Later Religious History*

One of the most interesting figures of medieval church history is that of St. Francis of Assisi, the four hundredth anniversary of whose death was recently observed. His religious experience is of special interest in connection with this study.

Through many centuries alongside of the Christian tradition and far outnumbering it in its adherents was the paganism which was bequeathed the world by the cultures of Greece and Rome. It had carried

to a riotous success the worship of the powers of nature in an individual sense. But this pagan worship of nature which had stained every flower, every plant, and heavenly body with the passions of men revolted from itself. The barbarous wars for self-preservation during the Middle Ages revived the austerity of an earlier past. The monastic institution, almost as old as Christianity itself, showed new life and energy, and sweeping reforms were carried out within the church. The Crusades represent the spirit of these times: clean, pure, and harsh. "The purge of Paganism is complete at last." "Man has stripped from his soul the last rag of nature worship and can return to nature."

Against this background appears the figure of Francis. Himself a personified revolt from the selfishness, the tragedy, and the hypocrisy of his environment, he assumed a rôle of humility and poverty, and wandering homelessness. His asceticism however was not that of the cloister but that of the open road, accompanied by a passion of reverence and respect as well as love for his fellow-men.

His assumption of the equality of men led him to do more than justice to the sinner against custom or tradition. "He listened to those to whom God himself will not listen," was the judgment of his fellows. His passion for simplicity, his utter disregard of self, and the soul satisfaction that came from these attitudes are expressed in his word, "Blessed is he who expecteth nothing, for he shall enjoy everything." His utter dependence upon God was shared not with all nature and all mankind as such, but with every individual man, woman, child, flower, star, beast, or bird, making each seem to him his "brother," and as such commanding his love and service. Even the inanimate water and the fire were his kinsmen. In all men he saw "the image of God" multiplied, but never monotonous.

The following is an extract from his "Canticle to the Sun."

Blessed be Thou, my Lord, for the gift of all Thy creatures and especially for our brother, Master Sun, by whom the day is enlightened. He is radiant and bright, of great splendour, bearing witness to Thee, O my God.

Blessed be Thou, my Lord, for our sister the moon and the stars; Thou hast formed them in the heavens, fair and clear.

Blessed be Thou, my Lord, for my brother the Wind, for the Air, for Cloud and Calm, for every kind of weather, for by them Thou dost sustain all creatures.

Blessed be thou, my Lord, for our sister Water, which is very useful, humble, chaste and precious.

Blessed be Thou, my Lord, for brother Fire, gay, noble and beautiful, untamable and strong, by whom Thou dost illumine the night.

Blessed be Thou, my Lord, for our mother the Earth, who sustains and nourishes us, who brings forth all kinds of fruit, herbs and bright-hued flowers.

And again:

My sisters the birds, you ought always to love the LORD your Creator, and praise Him much. He has given you feathers to clothe you and all else that is needful, and wings wherewith to fly. GOD has made you noble among creatures; in the midst of the pure air He has given you a dwelling; you sow not, neither do you reap; yet, delivering you from all care, He protects and directs you.

This all-embracing brotherliness of St. Francis toward objective nature as well as toward man has led to some misunderstanding of his character. He had no sentimental attitude toward animate and inanimate nature as many of the legends about him might suggest. These were but part and parcel of the universe of God. And it was in his deep religious experience of this great God and his universe that the world of nature ministered to him, taking the place as it were of home and hearth, wife and children, which he had denied himself. St. Francis with his joy in all creation can only be understood through an appreciation of his passion for self-sacrifice and the tragedies to which it led. But neither can his tragic life be understood without the glory of the ministry of birds and beasts, sky and flowers, which form so beautiful a setting to it.

IV. *Illustrations from Modern Poets*

It is impossible in the space at our command adequately to suggest the many out-of-door poems, long and short, which certainly were inspired by religious experiences. Nothing could be more rewarding than a search for these evidences in the poems of Wordsworth, Lanier, Bryant, Coleridge, Blake, Watson, and many others. In order to appreciate this type of literature one must keep clearly in mind that a genuine sense of God in the out-of-doors, *because one has felt it*, is a religious experience.

Read the following from Alice Brown:

Down in the meadow sprent with dew
I saw the Very God
Look from a flower's limpid blue,
Child of a starveling sod.

One can almost feel for himself the experience of Browning from the "Song" from *Pippa Passes:*

The year's at the spring,
The day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;

The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world.

Picture the experience that lies back of Ralph Waldo Emerson's stanza about his country home in the hills of New England:

O, when I am safe in my sylvan home,
I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome;
And when I am stretched beneath the pines
Where the evening star so holy shines,
I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,
At the sophist schools and the learned clan;
For what are they all, in their high conceit,
When man in the bush with God may meet?

The following from Watson Kerr reminds us of similar experiences of our own:

The round moon hangs like a yellow lantern in the trees
That lie like lace against the sky,
Oh, still the night! Oh, hushed the breeze—
Surely God is nigh.

Although such a poem as "The Marshes of Glynn," by Sidney Lanier, pictures experiences which only one who knew those marshes could appreciate, the poem has power to move any imaginative soul to thought of God.

The quaint poetry of James Stephens gives the following as something experienced while walking in the moonlight:

No thought had I
Save that the moon was fair,
And fair the sky,
And God was everywhere.

From Tagore, the Indian poet, comes the following:

In the stillness I hear in every blade of grass, in every speck of dust, in every part of my own body, in the visible and invisible worlds, in the planets, the sun, and the stars, the joyous dance of the atoms through endless time—the myriad murmuring waves of Rhythm surrounding Thy throne.

From Wordsworth's lines on Tintern Abbey we see the poet's conscious and habitual cultivation of religious feeling through the out-of-doors:

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime,
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Was not this purposeful seeking of religious inspiration through nature that which Sidney Lanier had in mind in the following stanza?

Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent.
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame,
But the olives they were not blind to Him;
The little gray leaves were kind to Him;
The thorn-tree had a mind to Him,
When into the woods He came.

Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content.
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.

. . . . . .

V. *Experiences of Scientists*

It has often been said that science is to take the place of religion. This may be true if religion is nothing more than a philosophy, or if it consists only of those conceptions of God and human obligations which have been inherited from the past. But if the personal testimony of many scientists themselves can be trusted, that is not necessarily the case. Science, of course, is a relative term. The methods of study, the phenomena of nature, and the conclusions and hypotheses which these methods warrant are constantly changing. Textbooks of thirty years

ago, indeed of much more recent date, need to be thoroughly revised before they can express our growing knowledge. There is nothing final in any descriptions of natural forces. Men used to assume an ether as necessary for light and heat if not for matter itself, but now there are outstanding scientists who question the existence of ether. A few years ago we thought of an atom as a tiny pellet of some element. Now we know that it is a vortex in which there are negative and positive charges, and the vanishing-point of matter so far from being dead stuff is activity. Man once thought a nebula was composed of gas. Now, at least in the case of the nebula Andromeda, we discover that a nebula may be a universe so far away that the stars within it seem no larger than the particles of gas.

The effects of these discoveries and of the scientific method upon human thought have varied. To some they seem to argue a mechanistic universe with nothing personal in it, but to others, and among them some of the greatest scientists of the day, these vast forces, and the microscopic entities, arouse the feelings of awe, suggestion of personal activities, the desire for harmony, which are associated with religious experience.

A few centuries ago such study, imperfect though it was, was regarded as unsafe. Those, who like legendary Faust, sought to pierce the secrets of the universe, were supposed to have sold their souls to Satan. So thoroughly has ecclesiastical control determined what man should believe regarding nature that men who ventured to publish their readings of nature were punished and even burned at the stake. But religion is too much an urge of humanity itself for men who came to understand their universe, even partially, to find within it either Satan or mere physical and chemical forces. As they came to know these forces better, their wonder was matched by their humility and their understanding by reverence. One of the most famous sayings of all time was that of a great scientist who, after having pushed his experimental knowledge far beyond that of his contemporaries, cried out, "O God, I thank thee that I think thy thoughts after thee!"

Something like fifty years ago a penniless Serbian boy landed in New York. He did rough work of all sorts until at last he was able to work his way through college, become an especial student of physics, and gradually won his way into a teacher's position. By virtue of his knowledge and his inherent ability he became one of the greatest physicists of our day. In his most interesting autobiography, *From Immigrant to Scientist*, Michael Pupin describes the deepening of his religious interests and the virtue of his knowledge of the forces of nature. This he restates in an article entitled "Creative Co-ordination."

The smooth and steady motion of the piston in the boiler-room, assisting the trained hand of man in the factory; the roaring furnace flames in the foundry announcing the birth of beautiful castings; the radiating chaos of our central star, the sun, sustaining the ceaseless terrestrial cycles of co-ordinated energy movement; the messages transmitted to man by the galaxy of stars, proclaiming the lavish expenditure of their inexhaustible store of energy as a preparation for higher forms of creation; all of them tell the same joyous story which Tyndall first told me fifty years ago, the story of transformation of the primordial chaos into a cosmos, a universe of beautiful law and order. This is also the story of the universe of organic life. The truth which this story reveals was recognized intuitively by man since the very beginning of civilization and, guided by the power of his creative soul, he began to dream of a social cosmos which makes life worth living. The awakening from this beautiful dream is the birth of church and state; guided by the love of God and of fellow man these social co-ordinators will certainly give us a social cosmos, the realization of the highest aspiration of the human soul.[1]

It almost seems as if the scientists who dealt with the great forces of nature as described in the science of physics, astronomy, and geology were particularly susceptible to the religious influence of nature. It may be because of the very magnitude of the forces and spaces with which they deal that their sense of awe is more aroused than in the case of those who deal with the less measurable forces of biology and psychology. At any rate, we have the personal confessions of religion of many leaders in these fields.

One of two Americans granted the Nobel Prize for discovery in science is Robert A. Millikan.[2] He is universally recognized as one of the world's greatest physicists, and his study of the electron marks, onemight almost say, an epoch in our new understanding of the structure of matter. While Professor Millikan has always been an active Christian, the recent theological controversies have led him to more precise statements of his religious convictions. He speaks not as a theologian but as a physicist, and the habit of minute observation lends weight to his confession of his personal belief.

Similarly science in the formulation of the theory of evolution has the world developing through countless ages higher and higher qualities, moving on to better and better things. It pictures God, however you may conceive him, as essentially good, as providing a reason for existence and a motive for making the most of existence, in that we may be a part of the great plan of world progress. No more sublime conception of God has ever been presented to the mind of man than that

[1] *Scribner's Monthly*, August, 1927.

[2] President of the California Institute of Technology.

which is furnished by science when it represents him as revealing himself through countless ages in the development of the earth as an abode for man and in the age-long inbreathing of life into its constituent matter, culminating in man with his spiritual nature and all his god-like powers.

Among the astronomers religious experience begotten of study is especially common. In a way their words are sometimes almost a paraphrase of the words of the Psalmist. Dr. Edwin B. Frost[1] stands in the first rank of investigators in this field. His religious experience leads him to say:

> Can anyone doubt that the recognition of the immense size and detail of the celestial universe must give to all who consider it a new and larger idea of the Cause behind it? There is no adequate evidence known to the writer that the universe is automatic, that it has within itself the power to make the laws which govern it. Mere matter cannot be imagined to be endowed with such capacity. The universe is a cosmos, as has been indicated in what we have already said, and from evidence which we shall cite farther on. It is not a haphazard aggregation of fortuitous and accidental bodies moving without system or order. It is perfectly true that we cannot comprehend in spite of all the efforts of science the whence and the whither or the why of all this. Nor is it to be supposed that these problems will ever be solved by the human mind. Each generation of students may contribute its little part and sometimes the questions are pushed a little farther back toward the cause, but Omniscience would doubtless be required to understand the works of Omnipotence.

In America two names stand out among the earlier advocates of evolutionary hypotheses—Professor Asa Gray, a botanist, and John Fiske. The latter is more of a philosopher than the former but any reader of his *The Idea of God*, as well as the more elaborate work on *Cosmic Philosophy*, will see that he found his religious faith enlarged and strengthened by his scientific knowledge. He says:

> When from the dawn of life we see all things working together toward the evolution of the highest spiritual attributes of man, we know, however the words may stumble in which we try to say it, that God is in the deepest sense a moral being. The everlasting source of phenomena is none other than the infinite power that makes for righteousness.

A great botanist, Professor John M. Coulter,[2] has through his long and distinguished life been an active Christian. Repeatedly he has testified to the religious value of the study of life as seen in plants. In a recent

[1] Director of the Yerkes Observatory of the University of Chicago.

[2] For many years at the head of the Department of Botany at the University of Chicago, now director of the Institute of Plant Research, Yonkers, N.Y.

work written by himself and his son, *Where Evolution and Religion Meet*, he has expressed his faith in the following words:

> The reason why so many scientific men believe in Christianity is that they find it to be thoroughly scientific. What can be called a scientific approach to religion may be outlined briefly as follows:
>
> Religion is now known to be a universal human impulse. No race of men of any age of the world failed to give expression to this impulse. Any universal impulse must have some function. The function of the food impulse, for example, is to keep us in health and vigor. It seems obvious that the function of the religious impulse is to develop the greatest efficiency, to bring man to the highest expression of his being.

Professors J. Arthur Thompson and E. G. Conklin, both masters of the field of organic evolution, are equally conscious of the ministry of scientific knowledge to religion. There are, of course, scientists who disclaim religious sympathies, but even when they hesitate to commit themselves to the idea of a personal God, they reverently confess the conviction borne of their studies that there is some infinite Reason that works in the universe. Such a faith is in itself profoundly religious, however unphilosophical or untheological it may be. A physiologist like Albert P. Mathews interprets evolution thus:

> There has been a definite order in evolution; we might almost say a definite aim. The road of evolution has not always been direct, but so far as the land has permitted it has followed straight towards a city—the city of man's desire, the castle of his will. The goal is liberty. Liberty for what? Is not the answer in every man's conscience? Is it, can it be anything else than the final liberty of the spirit? Liberty for that part of the immortal consciousness of the universe which is imprisoned within us. Is this great unconscious struggle upward of that frail slime we saw beginning its life, a struggle out of water on to the land, off the land into the air, anything else than that same spirit which every man feels within himself, bidding him strive and not be conquered? Evolution is the spirit struggling to throw off the trammels of matter. Is it not that same spirit come to consciousness which inspires our poets? The same spirit which exclaims, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The goal of evolution —can it be anything else than immortality?

Perhaps the religious experience of the modern scientist is best summed up in a paragraph from the pen of a southern scholar in his volume entitled *The New Science and the Old Religion.*

> The devout scientist emphasizes the order of the universe, its marvelous perfection amid mystifying complexity, the necessity of a source of its infinite and eternal energy, the evidence of super-intelligence and super-purpose directing

its progress. . . . . what the theologian calls the providence of God, the Will of the universe. This Will seems to be eternally engaged in an unending process of creation. The scientist calls this continuous process evolution and labors to understand and explain it. Its direction-on-the-whole he calls progress. He knows by what interminable warfare and fathomless suffering its each tiny increment has been won. He keeps constantly wondering what addition he or his generation will make to the sum total of assets heretofore accumulated by the race. With all the earnestness of his soul he desires to see this evolutionary process continued especially in the case of man. He judges every thought, every feeling, every deed, every law, every custom of individual or society by its effect in setting forward or retarding this Will. The prayer that Jesus taught His disciples expresses the religion of the modern devout scientist exactly: "Thy Will be done on earth as it is in the heavens."

VI. *The Method of Religious Experience*

In this section of the monthly study we want to do two things. We want to learn how to prepare for religious experience and profit by it, and we want to pool our experiences so that we can learn from one another. The art of how to prepare for religious experience and profit by it is one of the great practical arts of human living. Like every other art it must be developed. The only way to develop any art is for people to tell one another what they have learned through their experiences and efforts. Cannot we all, who have a share in this course, co-operate in the enterprise of improving the art of entering into and profiting by the religious experience? Wonderful possibilities for increasing joy and mastery in living are attainable through proper use of religious experience. Indeed, its proper use is the master art in life, for through it all the other arts of living can be improved.

We crudely talk about air and water and food and social group as the factors upon which we must depend for our welfare and improvement. But these are mere fragments in that vast, mysterious, mighty Working which operates in us and upon us and around us throughout all nature. In religious experience there is some conscious awareness of this mighty and blessed Working. When we come into the presence of some great manifestation of nature we may suddenly become aware of this all-sustaining Working. We may feel ourselves borne up by it, or see it gazing up at us in the face of a flower, or towering over us in the mountains, or feel it encompassing us with the greenery of the wood.

But this sense of the mighty Working does not always come to us in the presence of nature. There may be some to whom it never comes. Others it may visit very rarely.

Here we are face to face with a subtle and loathsome temptation.

It is the temptation to make ourselves think that we have this exalted experience when we do not have it. Our minds run something like this: It is the proper thing to have this experience in the presence of nature. Poets and prophets and many great souls have had it. I guess I can too. Then we go through all the motions of having the experience and really make ourselves think that we have it.

Can, then, one cultivate this experience? No, not directly. But one can prepare himself for it. One may put himself in the way of having it. It is like love. One cannot make himself love his brother. But the great contagion is likely to infect him if he is receptive to it and puts himself in situations where it is likely to befall him. So religious experience must come of itself, often quite unexpectedly; but one can conduct his life in such a way that it is likely to befall him. That is part of what we mean by the art of preparing for religious experience.

But when the experience comes it may have no value save to provide the luxury of a pleasant or stirring emotion. To have conscious awareness of this all-sustaining Working does not bring one any closer to it, for one is always as close to it as he can get. There are some natures who can enter frequently and deeply into genuine and vivid awareness of God and yet live weak, futile, slovenly lives. To have conscious experience of God does not necessarily help a man at all. To conduct ourselves in such a way that religious experience not only may befall us but that it may have beneficial results for us is the whole of what we mean by the art of preparing for religious experience and profiting by it.

Great living depends on making proper adaptation to that Working upon which all life is dependent. If conscious experience of that Working helps one to make better adaptation to it, his life will be better. But merely to have a vivid and exalted consciousness of that Working will not help him if the experience does not enable him to make better adaptation. On the other hand, a man who does adapt himself to the working of God, even though he may have no conscious experience of God, will live a great life. Through the teaching of others, and through results of careful experimentation, a man can learn how to adapt to many things of which he has never had any conscious experience. This applies to the working of God as well as to other matters. But religious experience may be of great help to a man in making better adaptation to that Working upon which human life is dependent for its greatest goods. In fact, this is the only enduring and practical value religious experience can have. If it does not do this its value is purely sentimental. It is quite easy to be unduly sentimental and rapturous about religious experience for its own sake.

There are, then, two very urgent and very practical questions pertaining to religious experience: (1) how to put one's self in the way of having the experience; (2) how to use the experience in such a way as to attain better adaptation to the working of God as he operates throughout space and time. Let us reduce these two questions to one: how to prepare for religious experience in such a way that it will bring us into better adjustment to God.

We answer this question under four points.

1. One must face the chief difficulties and perplexities of his life and wrestle with them. He must take life seriously. He must draw on his every resource of physical endurance and mental agility and nervous energy and dogged determination to master circumstance and make human life more satisfactory for himself and others. This strain and burden-bearing, this taking of life seriously, is necessary preparation for profitable religious experience. The frivolous and superficial generally do not have great religious experiences. Some of them, however, do; but when they do, their experience is only the luxury of a sweet and exalted emotion such as we described above.

2. But earnest wrestling with the serious problems of life is only preparation for profitable religious experience. Such wrestling does not ordinarily in itself yield the experience. Rather the experience is likely to come when one stops the fight for a breathing spell and a short period of relaxation. One goes off, let us say, where he can be alone with nature, in a scene quite different from that in which he has been trying to solve his difficult problems.[1]

This, then, is the second requirement for entering into a profitable religious experience. One must leave the struggle of life, occasionally, for a little spiritual relaxation. In this month's study we suggest turning to nature. Further suggestions for the use of this time of relaxation will be made in later lessons. In this period of relaxation, if rightly conducted, the religious experience is most likely to come.

3. The experience that comes in the interval of relaxation should provide some insight toward the solution of the problems which have been engaging one's attention in the struggle of living. Here we have the chief function of religious experience. It is an experience through which discoveries are made concerning how to live more effectively and more abundantly; how to achieve mastery over difficulties and mount to higher levels; in a word, how to live in better adaptation to the working

[1] As illustration read Philip Cabot's record of his own experience in the first chapter of his little book *Except Ye Be Born Again*, an autobiographical account of how a business man "got religion."

of God. Religious experience should be the moment of profound insight and new adjustment to the total environment. Great conversions occur in such experiences. All the famous conversions, from Paul's down, have occurred through such experiences. A conversion is simply the discovery and adoption of some new way of living in better adaptation to the Working which is God. But conversion is not the only form of moral and spiritual discovery and initiation that may occur through religious experience. After "conversion" one may make further discoveries. Often the new insight is of such a nature that you cannot word it. You simply have found out how to live with peace and power you never had before.

4. The fourth requirement is that this new way of living which has come to one in the religious experience must be carefully, observantly, and patiently tested by living it. A new way of living is not necessarily successful at the very start. Generally it is not. And often its success is not apparent to any save those of deepest insight. But one must be teachable in the conduct of his new way of life. He must modify and adapt and reshape it to fit the conditions with which he has to deal. No one is worse than the hair-brained fanatic who will not learn from the results of trial and error, but insists that his way is unalterably right because he got it from God.

It is even possible that one's new way of life, discovered through religious experience, may be a mistake. The human mind is always fallible, and it does not cease to be human even when it undergoes religious experience. He who must have an iron-clad guaranty that he will make no mistakes can have no share in great living whether through religious experience or otherwise. But the great insights, the great transformation of personality and human history, have been initiated in such experiences.

The whole value of religious experience, we repeat, aside from the luxury of emotion, is that through it we discover how better to adapt our human lives to the Working upon which we are dependent for the greatest good. It should enable us to make better adjustment to God.

Two final points must be clear. The experience need not be highly emotional. The important thing is the insight that is attained concerning how better to live with God. There may or may not be a thrill and sense of exaltation. Secondly, the insight may not be something that will revolutionize human history. Generally it is not. It may be a discovery of how better to deal with your child; or how to win the good will of your neighbor; or how to make better use of your time; or how to get over some nagging perplexity which is important to you personally, although it may never be known to any other.

And we must remember that anything which truly and in the long

run benefits human life is, ultimately, a better adaptation to the vast and mighty Working which lifts us to the highest when we find how to yield ourselves to its lifting power.

Keeping in mind, therefore, the nature of religious experience, the possibility of placing one's self in the way of it and the resultant effect upon the art of practical living, can we, after our observations of the experience of historical characters, turn our eyes upon our own immediate environment, and learn to recognize the results of religious experience in others, and to recall some data regarding our own religious experience.

It will be a good plan to keep a notebook with this course, jotting down observations, memories and new experiences which seem to you to have some bearing upon the question, this month especially observing the extent to which contact with the world of external nature may foster and suggest a religious experience, always distinguishing those experiences which will stand the test of the points raised in this portion of our study. Students of the course are invited in addition to answering the review questions to report such observations and experiences. On the following page will be found an outline of work for those who desire to have criticism by correspondence.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What attitudes of primitive man expressed his religious feeling?
2. How did the ancient Hebrews regard such ordinary phenomena as rain, storm, and winds?
3. In what way does the experience of Elijah that you have studied verify the analysis of religious experience under Section VI?
4. Why can you not so easily apply this test to the passages from the Psalms?
5. How did the experience of God in his universe which Jesus felt differ in its general character from that of the prophets?
6. Do you think that Jesus consciously cultivated communion with nature? Give convincing illustrations.
7. Compare Paul with Jesus in this respect.
8. Give some of the peculiar characteristics of the communion with nature which we observe in St. Francis.
9. Do you think that a poet of nature is necessarily a religious man?
10. By what processes does a scientist come into touch with nature?
11. Is a man any the less dealing with the out-of-doors because he has taken his work into a laboratory?
12. How does Section VI define God?
13. Against what temptation does the author of this section warn people?
14. What is the real test of religious experience through nature?
15. Name the four requirements necessary to preparation for religious experience.
16. Has this study helped you to think more clearly regarding the character of such experience?
17. Have you made any personal experiments or observations as a result of the study? (This question may be answered by "yes" or "no" or by an actual report, according to the student's wish.)

Study II[1]

Religious Experience through Communion, Meditation, and Worship

I. *Introduction*

It should never be forgotten that religion is a personal experience. We often discuss it in the abstract; but the ultimate facts of religion are found in the lives of religious people.

In this study we are to call attention to this specifically personal aspect of religion and to indicate some familiar ways in which people realize the values which religion brings. The practices and ideals here presented may have their suggestions for our own religious life.

The cultivation of personal religion is an art, and, like any art, must be learned. This requires practice and repetition as well as meditation and aspiration. The values of such practice are very great. The individual who can feel himself to be a significant person in a universe full of meaning possesses a source of joy and courage the value of which is inestimable.

> Lord, what a change within us one short hour
> Spent in thy presence will prevail to make!
> What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,
> What parched grounds refresh as with a shower!
> We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
> We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
> Stands forth in sunny outline brave and clear;
> We kneel, how weak; we rise, how full of power!
> Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
> Or others, that we are not always strong,
> That we are ever overborne with care,
> That we should ever weak or heartless be,
> Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
> And joy and strength and courage are with thee?
>
> —Archbishop Trench

[1] The following persons have co-operated in the preparation of this study: Professor Gerald Birney Smith, Professor H. N. Wieman, and Miss G. L. Chamberlin (see Table of Contents).

II. *Illustrations from the Bible*

1. The idea of communion with God inevitably suggests striving after companionship and love. We cannot expect always to find examples of communion with God satisfying to ourselves in Old Testament history. Men thought of God in those remote times with fear and approached him in the attitude of propitiation. Notwithstanding fear of the power of God and the supposed necessity of resorting to sacrificial rites in order to please him, there was an underlying genuine desire after fellowship with God. It was that confidence in God's good will toward men that the writer of the letter to the Hebrews centuries later called faith. Read Hebrews, chapter 11. It is significant that Abraham is called in James 2:23 "the friend of God." That his desire for the good will of God led him to the disastrous conclusion that God desired the sacrifice of his beloved son as a burnt-offering does not alter the significance of the act as expressing genuine religious devotion.

Let us trace the steps as recorded in one of the most beautiful chapters of the Old Testament, Genesis, chapter 22. The opening words are a reflection of later theology. Let us ignore them and enter into the spirit of religious idealism which led Abraham continually to live on the highest moral plane that he knew. In deep gratitude for continuous prosperity, and the fulfilment of his desire for a son who should be a worthy successor to him in carrying on the traditions of his tribe, he is impelled from time to time to increase the number and value of his sacrificial offerings. The higher his own idealism rises, the more marvelous appears to him the God whom he worships and to whose favor he attributes all of his blessings. A time comes when the offerings from flocks and crops seem to him quite inadequate to express his feeling and to afford him the sense of communion with God that he craves. The idea of human sacrifice was not strange to him, and in a moment of religious ecstasy the thought of sacrificing his son takes hold upon him. No one can doubt the conflict between fatherly affection and this sacrificial impulse. Doubtless the struggle lasted weeks or months. The thing which interests us most, however, is the fact that in the very moment of achieving religious satisfaction from the supreme sacrifice, a higher religious level was reached, in the refusal of his father's heart to believe that his God required him to violate the responsibility and privilege of fatherhood.

Read the story of Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, Acts 22:3–11, and note particularly that, just as in the case of Abraham, Paul, with the highest religious zeal which the religious education of his times could inspire, is driven by his own struggle after harmony with God to see in the career of Jesus and his teaching of the fatherliness of God, the

thing which his own spirit craved. That which appeared to happen in the twinkling of an eye had been happening for a long time, and this moment marked the end of a struggle between Paul's ideal of God and the traditions and customs and religious thought of his times. So through these two instances and many others which might be chosen we find that men of biblical times made *new discoveries of God through obedience to the best they knew.*

2. It is easy for us to see that the early Old Testament idea of God as related to material offerings, symbols, and the like would lead to devotion to sacred places. The place where the ark was became consecrated and was the dwelling place of God. It was said when the ark was captured in battle with the Philistines "the glory of God is departed from Israel because the ark of God is taken." The "glory of God" is here a technical phrase signifying "presence of God." Only where the ark was could people pray with a feeling of assurance that God would hear and answer. Read the story of the return of the ark to Jerusalem, II Samuel, chapter 6, associating with it Psalm 24. David was bringing back the "glory of Jehovah" in order that he might more adequately commune with God. By many steps the Hebrews came gradually to a consciousness of the wider presence of God, but this experience was not one shared by every member of the Hebrew nation. We cannot get at the personal life-story of men who wrote the Psalms, but a very interesting contrast between two types of religious thinking is offered by the reading of Ps. 137 in connection with Ps. 139. In the first of these the picture that is raised by the writer of the psalm is that of a group of sad and angry people unable to sing the songs of Zion, that is, to commune with God, in the land of Babylon to which they had been taken as captives. They were a religious group, but their religion expressed itself in pining for Jerusalem, and in cursing those who had destroyed it. Reading Ps. 139, which may have come from a period not remote from that of the author of the former, we see a man whose spirit has been freed from all sense of God as confined to any definite place. The darkness, the light, the whole world, the heavens, even Sheol, are filled with his presence, and things visible and invisible to mortal eye are seen by him. This devout soul cries out, "Search me, O God, and know my heart." Here is communion which helps us to see the long way which one man's experience had traveled.

Read the story of Jesus and the woman of Samaria, John 4:1–24, noting particularly verse 24. Jesus was speaking to people of his own day, and the things which he said were comprehensible to some of the religious idealists of his times. But the thing which we note here is the

fact that Jesus asserts that the spirit of God could answer to the spiri of man, and that God himself was eager for such communion.

3. In the days of the great prophets, the most spiritual leaders of th Old Testament times, there was a popular tradition that God spoke t men in visions. It was difficult sometimes to distinguish between th dream and the vision. The prophet Joel, in a time of great disaster, look ing forward to an ideal future, says, "Your sons and your daughters shal prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shal see visions." This was carrying on the old idea of the ecstatic state int which the early prophets fell, and it also describes the situation in con nection with a number of the important pronouncements of the grea prophets. Let us study in some detail a few of these visions. Amos, afte an unsuccessful visit to the northern royal sanctuary of the Hebrews has been shocked and distressed by the superficiality and the absolute lac of moral content in the religion of his fellow-countrymen. They scoute his message, Amos 1–6, and expelled him from the sanctuary, Amos 7:10 14. But he is unable to forget the situation and to abandon the task whic he believes Jehovah has placed upon him. In the struggle of his min to know God's will and to tell it to the people, he describes his thoug as a vision. He says, "I saw the Lord standing upon the altar." Rea Amos 9:1–8. And in 8:1–14 he says, "The Lord God *showed* me a baske of summer fruit"; and in chapter 7:1–9 "Thus the Lord God *showed* me, going on to describe material pictures which have come to his min which illustrate with startling clearness the attitude of God toward th people who had refused to listen. These visions appearing to Amos di not tell him something which he did not already know, but they we the imginative clothing of a truth of which he already had a deep convi tion. His mind was working with the mind of God.

Read Isa. 6:1–13, describing the prophet's vision of the Lord in th temple. It is said that this story of the vision of Isaiah was written fro memory long after its occurrence, and that the discouraging attitu taken by Jehovah in verses 9 and 10 is a reflection of experience whi the prophet had already undergone, in the unfavorable reception of h message of warning to the people. But note that this vision comes Isaiah at a very critical moment, 6:1. King Uzziah, the leper king w was supposed to have violated the sanctity of the altar by attempting perform a sacrifice in the temple, had died. His death had reminded t whole nation of the supposed anger of Jehovah, and had emphasized h peculiar holiness. Under the influence of these suggestive thoughts Isai becomes filled with an overpowering sense of the presence and the ho ness of God, and his feeling takes visible form in the vision of the Lo

upon a throne, surrounded by heavenly beings who sing "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts." The vision is so powerful and clear that Isaiah is overcome by his sense of unworthiness. But the result is a crystallizing of his own determination to make the people see this holy God as he saw him, a thing which they could do only by completely changing their ideals and ways of life. In the strength of this vision Isaiah goes out to his task of reproval and exhortation.

Another prophet, Ezekiel, living two generations later among the Hebrews in captivity in Baylon, speaks to his fellow-countrymen after years of exile with them. His early visions seem only to impress one with the incomprehensiblity of God, as though the mind of the prophet were struggling to describe something which was to him indescribable. Read chapter 1, and note the effect of Ezekiel's musing upon this confused picture which he calls the "glory of the Lord." But out of it comes the clear sense of a task to be performed and the strength to perform it, difficult as it was. This man Ezekiel used so habitually the figure of the vision in his ministry, that one cannot say how many of his messages were cast in the form of visions as a device for gaining the attention of the people. But there can be no doubt that back of such expressions as "the spirit lifted me up" and "the spirit of the Lord fell upon me," which occur over and over again, there was some experience which lifted the man out of himself and caused his imagination to paint in vivid terms great moral truths which he felt bound to give to his people. Read 12:1–20, and note how detailed are the things which Ezekiel does because of the—one almost might say—conference which he has had with the Lord. Read through chapters 20–35 and notice how continually the phrase occurs, "And the word of the Lord came to me, saying 'O mortal man,' " etc. Note in chapter 7 the conversation between the prophet and the Lord. There is an intimacy in all this about which one cannot be mistaken. But notice that this intimacy of the prophet with the Lord is not for his own benefit, but it is part of a process of making the prophet effectual in his task. If this communion was sought by the prophet it was as a source of strength to do the thing that he thought was his duty, and it would have no significance apart from the task which he had in hand.

4. When one thinks of meditation he involuntarily thinks also of retirement to solitary places. It is easy to find examples of such retirement both in the Old and the New Testament. One which is of particular interest is that of Moses who went up into the mountain to meet with God. Recall that Moses took with him the problem of the Hebrew people who were yet unorganized, uncontrolled, a migrating tribe without

trained leadership other than his own. After a rough organization of the people into groups under leaders whom he had appointed he faced the problem of a lack of any sort of authoritative standard. These problems he took to God. Emerging after his retirement he gave to the people, with the authority of God, a code of laws simple, essential, exactly what the people needed, not new, for they were paralleled in earlier laws of other peoples, but what may be called an inspired selection of the best that man, working with God, could choose at that time. What happened in the mountain we do not know, but we feel certain that it was a time of rich communion with God, Exod. 19:1–21. Another interesting example is that of John the Baptist emerging from the retirement of the wilderness to speak with prophetic power the spiritual message which had come to fruition in his solitude.

III. *Illustrations from Wider Sources*

1. *Sincerity is essential to genuine religious experience.*—Much misunderstanding and prejudice is caused by the feeling that religion is often not genuine. We frequently listen to sentimental expressions which we instinctively recognize to be very superficial. We find people sanctimoniously making professions at one time and place and living according to very different ideals at other times. It will be recalled that Jesus was constantly attacking hypocrisy as a deadly foe to true religion.

The superficial formality of much religion becomes acutely evident when one faces a crisis. A young minister who enlisted in the World War testifies that when in that atmosphere he had to listen to the words of the army chaplains, he came to the appalling conclusion that their religion was "nothing but words." He resolved then and there that any religion which he might have should grow out of his encounter with reality, and not be developed merely by repeating words.

This means that in the cultivation of the religious life each person should begin with what is indubitably real to him. Several years ago George Kennan wrote a very interesting account of his acquaintance with the famous mission which Jerry McAuley was conducting in New York City. He thought that perhaps the most striking characteristic of that mission was the spirit of absolute sincerity which was inspired in those who came. One evening the mission was visited by two conventional religious people from a fashionable church. Both of them gave personal testimonials which Mr. Kennan says would probably have seemed both pertinent and edifying in the ordinary church prayer-meeting. But in that atmosphere the remarks did not quite ring true. They were too complacent. As soon as the second testimony was finished, Jerry

McAuley rose quietly and said, "If you want to be religious, feel honestly and speak the truth. God hates shams." This remark of the leader, Mr. Kennan says, cleared the spiritual atmosphere so that everyone could breathe freely.

Many of the great leaders of spiritual idealism have won their right to leadership by courageously insisting upon genuineness. The religious power of the Protestant Reformation is expressed in the statement attributed to Luther when he stood at the parting of the ways with the church in which he had been educated: "Here stand I; I can do no other, so help me God." It was this passion for unmistakable reality which gave to Luther his tremendous influence in the realm of religion. By contrast, many of the Catholic leaders were too evidently concerned to preserve a certain form of religion rather than to get at the truth.

We may also recall the attitude of Abraham Lincoln toward religion. He was unwilling to identify himself formally with any church because in his estimation all churches would expect him to profess to believe something which he really did not believe. The honesty and sturdiness of his faith comes out strikingly in his great second inaugural address. One should read it in this connection if possible.[1]

The cultivation of personal religious life, then, should begin in sincerity. Only thus will the cultivation of devotion be real. As Professor William Adams Brown says, "Prayer is not something we do because we must nor even because we ought. It is a natural expression of what is best in ourselves, a way in which we realize the larger life which is laid out for us in God."

2. *Sincerity leads one to begin with familiar ways which suggest fellowship with God.*—Normally the religious life is cultivated by the observation of special times for worship, the recognition of sacred places and days, the use of familiar sacred books, and the like. It is true that such a use of definite objects and places in religion may readily mean the limiting of religion to those times and places. Nevertheless it is probable that one can gain a stronger impression of reality in religion in such special ways than by a more hazy and informal plan of devotion.

The religious life of a Roman Catholic is particularly full of content by the constant use of just such sacred objects. The following poem reproduces the very beautiful and simple spirit of such piety. It will be noted that behind the details which play so important a part in Catholic devotion lies a wider and more profound religious desire.

[1] In any public library.

Christ, His Cross shall be my speed!
Teach me, Father John, to read:
That in Church on Holy Day
I may chant the Psalms and pray.

Let me learn that I may know
What the shining windows show:
Where the lovely Lady stands,
With that bright Child in her hands.

Teach me the letters ABC
Till that I shall able be
Signs to know and words to frame
And to spell sweet Jesus' Name.

Then, dear Master, will I look
Day and night in that fair book
Where the tales of Saints are told
With their pictures all in gold.

Teach me, Father John, to say
Vesper-verse and Matin-lay:
So when I to God shall plead,
Christ His Cross shall be my speed!

Protestants may well ask themselves whether they have any such definite procedure for realizing the reality of their religion.

In Christian tradition the cross has come to be a symbol which readily suggests profound religious experience. The following is a vivid portrayal of what a devoted worshiper experiences when entering to pray in a Catholic church with the altar in the foreground:

For in the quiet of the shadowed aisle,
The tired eyes are lifted to behold
The blessed Cross, illumined by the gleam
Of crimson from the sanctuary lamp,
Hung in the chancel by a silver chain,
Burning forever. And amid the gloom
The soul can leave the body and ascend
The stair that leads from earth through flame and cloud
Up to God's heaven, and forget man's hell.

The powerful suggestiveness of meditation on the meaning of the cross has been expressed in the classical hymn of Isaac Watts,

"When I survey the wondrous Cross,"

In Protestantism it has been customary to cultivate the religious life by the reading of the Bible. John Calvin, in indicating the supreme place of Scripture in the Christian's religious life, suggests that the believer will read his Bible saying to himself, "God is speaking these words to me now." Some of the great interpreters of religion have used scripture reading as a pre-eminent means of realizing fellowship with God. The story of Augustine's conversion is familiar. When he was sitting in misery because he could not find release from his sense of sin he heard a voice repeating to him, "Take up and read, take up and read." He took up the New Testament which he had been reading and happened on the verse, "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envy; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." Augustine says, "No further would I read, nor did I need; for instantly as the sentence ended, by a light, as it were, of security infused into my heart, all the gloom of doubt vanished away."

Another example of religious illumination through reading the Bible is John Bunyan. In fact, his entire religious life seems to have been singularly dependent upon his ability to visualize verses of scripture. If there came into his mind certain verses pronouncing judgment upon sinners he would be in spiritual agony for that day. If, on the other hand, some verse of promise or comfort were in his mind, the day would be full of joy and hope. In his account of his religious experience given in *Grace Abounding* he constantly refers his moods to the passage in the Bible which he had read. After quoting a text full of good cheer, he would write, "This gave me good encouragement for the space of two or three hours." Or again, "This was a good day to me. I hope I shall not forget it." Or again, "The glory of these words was then so weighty on me that I was ready to swoon as I sat; yet not with grief and trouble, but with solid joy and peace." Bunyan's great masterpiece, *Pilgrim's Progress*, is built almost entirely on scripture texts which his imagination enlarges into the visions and experiences which make the book such fascinating reading.[1]

The conception of the Bible which has come as a result of historical study doubtless makes such experiences as those of Augustine and Bunyan seem somewhat artificial for a modern man. The fundamental principle of sincerity requires us not to pretend to possess anything which is not really ours. The historical way of reading the Bible, however, brings into prominence the personal experience of biblical characters, and thus en-

[1] The student may well review it in this connection.

ables us from a new angle to derive a starting-point for our own religious growth.

Because of its vividness we may cite here a way of cultivating the religious life which belongs peculiarly to the Roman Catholic church. In a little booklet designed to help Catholic children to appreciate the meaning of their first communion, we have the following words: "When the priest puts Holy Communion on our tongues we know we have Jesus. Holy Communion looks like bread; it tastes like bread. But it is not bread. It is Jesus. We cannot see Jesus because He is hidden there." The power of the conviction that the real divine presence is in the bread of Holy Communion is an extremely important factor in Roman Catholic religious devotion. Protestants may well ask themselves whether they have anything comparable in suggestiveness to the routine of the Roman Catholic, who can make God real through contact with many sacred objects. We do well to make the most of all those aspects of religion which have a definite spiritual appeal: the memory of one's childhood's bedtime prayer, the beauty of a little child at prayer, the sense of awe induced by the church, the peculiar reverence induced by the use of the Bible as God's word, the quiet joy which comes from singing hymns in company with others, and the hours set apart for meditation and prayer. All of these may of course be altered or even abandoned, but we must begin somewhere in the cultivation of our devotional life, and it is best to begin at those points where a feeling of reality may be found.

3. *Vision and insight are fundamental in a truly religious life.*—One of the mysterious aspects of our experience is the way in which things "come to us" in unexpected and often inexplicable ways. This is true not simply of religion, but in all realms. Scientists often experience a sudden insight, as when Galileo watched the swinging pendulum in the church, or Newton saw the infinite significance of the falling apple. The literature of religion is full of visions and insights which constitute new starting-points for the life of the individual. We have seen how the great characters of the Bible portray their experience frequently in the form of vivid visions, as when Isaiah saw the Lord "high and lifted up," or Paul was changed from a persecutor into a disciple by an overpowering vision.

This experience of insight may not take the pictorial form of visions, but may nevertheless constitute an experience of such compelling profundity as to give tone to all of life. It is narrated of St. Ignatius that his special power was frequently derived from visions.

> Absorbed in contemplation of divine things, the saint seated himself for a time by the road looking at the stream which crossed it. Then the eyes of his

soul were opened and were inundated with light. He perceived nothing that fell under his senses, but he comprehended marvelously a great number of truths pertaining to the faith or to the human sciences. They were so numerous and the light was so bright that he seemed to enter into a new world.

Jonathan Edwards after his conversion had an experience which many others have had under similar circumstances.

> The appearance of all things was altered; there seemed to be, as it were, a calm beautiful appearance of divine glory in almost everything: God's excellency, His wisdom, His purity and love seemed to appear in everything: in the sun, moon, and stars; in the water, in all nature, which used greatly to fix my mind.

James Russell Lowell, who would never be suspected of religious fanaticism, reports a very interesting incident of such a moment of spiritual awareness. He wrote to his friend, Charles Eliot Norton,

> I had a revelation last Friday evening. I was at Mary's, and happening to say something of the presence of spirits (of whom, I said, I was often dimly aware), Mr. Putnam entered into an argument with me on spiritual matters. As I was speaking the whole system rose up before me like a vague Destiny looming from the abyss. I never before so clearly felt the spirit of God in me and around me. The whole room seemed to me full of God. The air seemed to waver to and fro with the presence of something, I knew not what. I spoke with the calmness and clearness of a prophet.
>
> I cannot tell you what this revelation was. I have not yet studied it enough. But I shall perfect it one day, and then you shall hear it and acknowledge its grandeur. It embraces all other systems.

A glorious interpretation of such insight is given by the poet Tennyson in his familiar poem entitled "The Higher Pantheism":

> The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains,
> Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?
>
> And is not the Vision He? Tho' He be not that which He seems?
> Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy doom,
> Making Him broken gleams and a stifled splendor and gloom.
>
> Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
> Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.
>
> God is law, say the wise; O Soul, and let us rejoice,
> For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

Almost everyone can point to some moment in his life when the exaltation of a noble ideal or a great enthusiasm or a sense of the glorious mystery of the world lifted him out of his commonplace and initiated him into a new realm of wonderful spiritual reality. These moments of vision and insight should be treasured and should be so correlated with the rest of our life that they may not remain obscure as inexplicable experiences, but may be so blended with our entire life as to give tone and vigor to all that we do. It is thus that the moments of religious inspiration may be kept from running into mere temporary ecstasy or irrational fanaticism.

4. *Meditation is indispensable to a profound kind of life.*—Perhaps one of the greatest spiritual defects of our day is the easy way in which people come to be dependent on external circumstances for their stimulation. The person who is restless and uneasy unless some entertainment is being provided by outside agencies is of all persons most miserable when these superficial stimulations are removed.

Meditation means taking time to realize meanings. The mother who spends much time thinking about her child realizes in that way the full meaning of motherhood. Both she and the child live in a richer, fuller world of possibilities just because of this meditation. The scientist must spend much time meditating on the significance of the experiments which he conducts. It is only through such relaxation in order to see the total implications of things that great results are achieved.

It is perhaps a common failing to attempt to cultivate the devotional life by too strenuous methods. It is expected that by an intensive ten minutes of Bible reading or prayer one will be fortified for the day. Most of us can recall times of extraordinary religious development which grew out of unpremeditated and apparently aimless discussion with some friend with whom we could be perfectly candid. Or perchance after reading some book the significance of the message may dawn upon one in a quiet hour, bringing with it a sense of peculiar illumination.

Tolstoi wrote in his diary of such periods of fruitful meditation when his thoughts were not too definitely controlled by a prearranged program, but his spirit was free to reach out and grasp the infinite possibilities of life.

Yesterday I hardly slept all night. Having posted up my diary, I prayed to God. It is impossible to convey the sweetness of the feeling I experienced during my prayer. I said the prayers I usually repeat by heart, "Our Father," "To the Virgin," etc., and still remained in prayer. If one defines prayer as a petition or as a thanksgiving, then I did not pray. I desired something supremely good; but what, I cannot express, though I was clearly conscious of what I wanted. I wished to merge into the Universal Being. I asked him to pardon my crime; yet

no, I did not ask for that, for I felt that if he had given me this blissful moment, he had pardoned me. I asked, and at the same time felt that I had nothing to ask; and that I cannot and do not know how to ask: I thanked him, but not with words or thought. I combined in one feeling both petition and gratitude. Fear quite vanished. I could not have separated any one emotion—faith, hope, or love—from the general feeling. No, this was what I experienced yesterday: it was love of God, lofty love, uniting in itself all that is good, excluding all that is bad.

Mrs. Herman, in her much-read book, *Creative Prayer*, says:

Who can compel love? we often ask; and how can we, whose spirits blow where they list, obey a command to love the Unseen? In meditation we may find an answer. We love God so little because we know Him so imperfectly. Who loves a chance acquaintance? "We know and have believed," says St. John, "the love of God towards us." The unknown may, and does, exert an initial attraction, but our response depends upon our knowledge. In valid meditation that knowledge dawns and grows. Thoughts come to us which are no mere intellectual apprehensions, but lay compelling hands upon emotion and will. Through them the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, and ere we know it we respond in some measure. We must needs love, since He has first loved us.

It is to be feared that under the stimulus of our modern life activity is too largely replacing meditation in the important realms of experience. Our spiritual life would be immensely enriched if meditation, either in the form of candid talks with intimate friends or in the form of reflecting on what we have read, should occupy a much larger place than it does. Professor William Adams Brown, in his helpful book entitled *The Life of Prayer in a World of Science*, suggests that if a period of meditation starts with some definite high theme the mere impetus of mental activity will carry one on in fruitful directions. Meditation is thus distinguished from aimless day dreaming.

When we think about God, let us think systematically; taking up one by one the permanent elements that have entered into man's experience of him through the ages: the experience of his mystery, of his power, of his wisdom, of his righteousness, of his love, that we may realize, as far as is humanly possible for us to do so, what they mean for us and for the world in which we are living. Or we may take up, one by one, the graces of the Christian character as the gospels and epistles bring them before us; or the vices with which they are contrasted. Or we may follow the life of our Lord through the gospels, or that of the Apostle Paul as he has recorded it for us in his letters, trying to draw from each event or experience in the record the lesson which it suggests for our own lives. The Bible, if only we train ourselves to use it, is an exhaustless reservoir of such themes for fruitful meditation—subjects directly applicable to the life of today. Take such a Psalm as the 104th—the story of what one man found in nature; or the 51st,

the experience of a man alone with God; or the 139th, that marvelous revelation of the encompassing presence. What modern words can ever thrill us as these classical expressions of perennial human experience?

5. *When one feels entirely at home in the devotional life it is perfectly natural to talk things over with God.*—Much great religious literature takes this form. We need only recall the frequent use of the first personal pronoun in the Psalms and in other biblical utterances.

One of the most impressive examples of this aspect of the religious life is to be found in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. He gives a very complete autobiography in these confessions, but in fascinatingly simple and honest fashion tells his boyish experiences as if he were confessing them to God. The following is an example:

> O my God! what miseries and mockeries did I then experience, when obedience to my teachers was set before me as proper to my boyhood, that I might flourish in this world, and distinguish myself in the science of speech, which should get me honour amongst men, and deceitful riches! After that I was put to school to get learning, of which I (worthless as I was) knew not what use there was; and yet, if slow to learn, I was flogged! For this was deemed praiseworthy by our forefathers; and many before us, passing the same course, had appointed beforehand for us these troublesome ways by labour and sorrow upon the sons of Adam. But we found, O Lord, men praying to Thee, and we learned from them to conceive of Thee, according to our ability, to be some Great One, who was able (though not visible to our senses) to hear and help us. For as a boy I began to pray to Thee, my "help" and my "refuge," and in invoking Thee broke the bands of my tongue, and entreated Thee though little, with no little earnestness, that I might not be beaten at school. And when Thou heardest me not, giving me not over to folly thereby, my elders, yea, and my own parents too, who wished me no ill, laughed at my stripes, my then great and grievous ill.

Augustine reviews his whole life in this conversational way, thus bringing constantly to bear upon his deeds and purposes standards derived from his fellowship with God.

In this type of conversation with God one is led to confess what he would not venture to tell to any human being. It therefore makes for that utter sincerity which, as we have already observed, is essential to true worship. Professor Henry N. Wieman searchingly expresses this in the following words:

> But most effective worship is always solitary, and in this matter of being definite, specific, and accurate it is very different from all forms of public worship. In the presence of others it would be shocking and outrageous to be as intimate and personal as one must be in solitary worship. In the presence of others one must use conventional phrases, pious forms and generalities broad enough to

include their thinking as well as one's own. But if the worshiper does not get beyond these conventional generalities and pious phrases in his private worship he will never accomplish anything. He must be precise and searching, cutting down to the roots of his nature, if he would worship effectively.

In this connection the significance of some of the great hymns appears. For example, the hymn "Lead Kindly Light" was written by Cardinal Newman at a time when he was very much perplexed in his religious life, and knew not which way to turn. That beautiful hymn, "O Love that wilt not let me go," was written by Dr. George Matheson when it became certain that he must lose his eyesight and felt especial need of divine help. The hymn "Abide with me" was written by a clergyman who knew that he had not long to live, and who voiced this classic expression of desire for God's companionship as one faces the dark unknown.

Occasionally we find prayers which are peculiarly moving because of this quality of honest personal fellowship with God. The following prayer by Dr. Thomas Arnold reveals the need of an especially busy man.

> O Lord, I have a busy world around me; eye, ear and thought will be needed for all my work to be done in that busy world. Do thou bless them and keep their work thine. When my mind cannot consciously turn to thee, may it still do thy will.

We are all acquainted with the prayer of Robert Louis Stevenson, in which his determined optimism is expressed in the face of the physical disabilities under which he labored:

> The day returns and brings us the petty round of irritating concerns and duties. Help us to play the man, help us to perform them with laughter and kind faces, let cheerfulness abound with industry. Give us strength to go blithely on our business all this day, bring us to our resting beds weary and content and undishonoured, and grant us in the end the gift of sleep. Amen.

A teacher and preacher of extraordinary spiritual influence once said that he had formed the habit of writing a letter to God whenever there came to him the sense of an especial need of conversation with God. In this way he carefully and thoughtfully brought his questions and trials and aspirations into the presence of God, and obtained the sense of reinforcement which comes when one shares his thoughts with a person of higher wisdom.

The foregoing are some of the ways in which personal religion is cultivated. Doubtless many others will occur to the readers of this lesson. Each one should develop the sort of method which best fits his tempera-

ment. It is only as one forms regularly some habit of devotion that the real power of religion is realized.

IV. *How to Get the Benefit of Private Worship*

The method of worship best adapted to one person is not always best for another. And the same person in different moods and circumstances will modify his method of worship to suit his need. Hence the suggestions we are about to make must not be taken as rigid rules. We can help one another by making these suggestions. But each must work out his own method. No study of rules and instructions ever enabled a man to swim the first time he jumped into deep water. He had to learn by practice. The same is true of worshipful meditation and communion.

Let us mention first three general conditions or preconditions which are helpful to worship.

The first of these we mentioned earlier. One must be living earnestly. One must not shirk the heavy responsibilities. One cannot swim in shallow water. One must venture out to depths where wading is difficult. If one is to worship successfully he must venture out into the depths. That does not mean that one must do something conspicuous before the world, or seek trouble. It merely means that one shall assume the tremendous responsibilities that await everyone who takes life seriously. It means, for example, if one is a parent, that he shall not treat his child merely as a plaything, but shall assume the enormous responsibility of that child's highest development. No matter how apparently circumscribed one's life may be, the great responsibilities are there for him to bear if he will shoulder them.

The first precondition of effectual worship is, then, that you take life seriously.

The second is sincerity. That means you will not take into your worship any beliefs concerning which you have any doubts. For example, suppose you doubt there is a God. Then do not try to believe there is a God. You can worship better without that belief if you are not absolutely sure of it. Discard any belief and every belief which you cannot hold with complete sincerity. Whenever any belief puts you under a sense of constraint, or gives you a feeling of unreality in your worship, pitch it out. Absolute sincerity, complete honesty with yourself, is indispensable to helpful worship.

A third precondition to worship is seclusion. Even a worshiping group should seclude itself. That is what a church building is for. But in private worship the individual should be alone. Of course one may achieve this required solitude of mind in physical association with others.

But it is best to go to some place where you can be completely alone, preferably at night just before retiring or soon after arising in the morning, or both. The ideal place would be a mountain top at night. That was where Jesus went for his private worship. But for most of us most of the time that is impossible. Some room will serve, especially if you can so shut yourself in that you need not fear others will hear you even when you speak aloud.

This need for solitude for worship arises out of the nature of private communion and meditation. To worship in this fashion means to cease the conduct of ordinary affairs in order to give your whole attention to that feature of your total environment which is supremely important for all human living. It means to turn from the lesser things in order to give the whole attention to God. If one does not believe in God one can call him by another name. I have a little son whom others call Robert, but whom I call Bobby. If you prefer to call God by another name, no harm is done. If the word God brings up doubts, then think of that behavior of the universe, whatever it may be, whether known or unknown, which is most helpful to human kind when we make right adjustment of our own activities to it. God is the supremely important object for all human living, whether or not you call him by that name. To worship is to give your whole attention to this supreme thing. To do this it is necessary to isolate yourself in order not to be distracted by lesser things.

What we have mentioned thus far—earnestness, sincerity, isolation—are the preconditions of worship. Let us now enter into the act of worship itself.

1. The first step in the act of worship is to relax and become aware of the all-encompassing presence. It is difficult to describe just what we mean, as difficult as to describe the acts by which you swim or walk or breathe. Another way of saying it is that we empty the mind and cease to think about anything in particular, yet are not in a state of stupor. It is a state of awareness. Awareness of what? Of that total encompassing presence which sustains you and shapes you and in adaptation to which all your life is lived in so far as it is lived well, and in so far as the greatest goods of life are attained by you. This presence is God; but if you have doubts about God, call it a certain behavior of the universe, or ozone, or electricity, or ether, or innumerable atoms, or any other misconception of God you may prefer. (We are trying to explain how one can worship and at the same time cast out every belief concerning which he has doubts.) Better let belief in God force itself into your mind against your will than try to hold it when it seems to be slipping away. Whatever you do, be honest.

This first step in the act of worship, then, is relaxed and empty-minded awareness of the all-encompassing presence.

2. The second step is to think of how this total process of atoms or electricity or ether (of course it is God) is working upon you and in you and through you to shape the cells of your body and the impulses of your mind into the likeness of Jesus Christ when you make right adjustment to it. If this thought about Jesus gives rise to any doubts, then think of that noblest kind of personality, that highest degree of health, that clearness of mind and greatness of purpose which may be yours when you make right adjustment to this total process of God. No matter how you may doubt your own possibilities, at least there is a maximum of nobility, a maximum of health and mentality and purpose of which you are capable, however small that maximum may be.

When we say one thinks about it, we do not mean one must know what that maximum is nor what shape it will assume. In fact one does not know except as he can see the maximum realization of these possibilities in some historic form as in Jesus. But you do not need to know what your highest possibilities are to think of them in the sense here indicated. You need merely to hold in mind that there are such possibilities for you, however, undefined and unexplored, and that they are to be attained through the working of this all-encompassing Reality.

This second step in the act of worship is, then, to call to mind the fact that you have a total maximum of possibility for good which God will accomplish in you and for you in so far as you make right adaptation to him.

3. The third step is to face the chief problem with which you are struggling. If you live earnestly you are always struggling with a problem which taxes your powers. You are in deep water where wading is difficult. So, in this third stage, after you have become aware of God (called by another name if you prefer) and of your own maximum but undefined possibilities through God, then face your major problem. Survey it as comprehensively and acutely as possible to find what most needs to be done.

4. The fourth step is to analyze yourself and find what mental attitude or habit of any kind needs to be corrected and readjusted in yourself in order that your activities may so fit into the behavior of things that the problem can be solved. What habits, not only of word and overt deed, but of inner attitude and secret impulse, must be changed in yourself in order to fit yourself into the working of the all-encompassing Presence. Your task is to adapt your activities and total personality in

such a way that you can "mesh in" with that behavior of the universe through which the greatest good can be attained.

But one must face the fact that this survey and analysis of self in face of his major problem may lead to radical change, or even total abandonment, of that program which he has been following. One may find that he is seeking the wrong things or has mistaken his problem. To make such a discovery is one of the great goods achieved through the worship we are describing. As a result of such worship one may turn right about and go in another direction. However, this is by no means the necessary result. The more common result, perhaps, is to find a way to carry through the task one has undertaken.

5. When you have discovered what readjustment is needed in yourself in order to make right connection with the behavior which is God, you must formulate this personal readjustment in positive terms. You must never stop with a merely negative attitude. The overcoming of a fault is always a positive constructive operation. It always consists of making some right adjustment in order to correct the wrong adjustment. This right adjustment must be formulated in mind as clearly, concisely, and accurately as possible. Put it into words. For example: "I am sensitive and sympathetic to the thought and feeling of others." Or: "I remember every detail when it is needed." Or: "I am calm and winsome and adaptable." Or whatever your need may be.

Some one may say: But the chief problem that engages me in worship has nothing to do with myself. I am praying for some one in Africa or otherwise far removed from anything that I can say or do or feel. No adjustment in myself can be of any avail whatsoever. My answer is: Anything which deeply interests you does have something to do with yourself. It has everything to do with yourself. If you pray about it, then it is through what you do, i.e., through your prayer, that any good is accomplished. Either your prayer is effective or it is not. If it is effective then it is because you prayed. That means it is effective because of the personal adjustment which you make to the potent working of your total environment. Let no one think genuine prayer is merely a mouthing of words with no adjustment of the total personality to the total environmental working of God.

So we say the fifth step in worship is positive statement to yourself of the required adjustment of your personality in light of the major problem which concerns you, so that God can work his good.

Some will wish to take a sixth step, that of verbal repetition, preferably spoken aloud to yourself, of this required adjustment of your

personality. "I am quick to see and feel the need of another." "I am simple and honest in all my dealings." "I think profoundly, comprehensively, and accurately." I am this or that, or I feel some way or another toward certain things or persons. What it is you repeat and the number of times you repeat it will, of course, depend on what you have found to be the required adjustment of your total thinking, feeling, willing, doing personality.

The words repeated are not necessarily prayers to God, although one may so apply them to God if he chooses. The communion with God has already been accomplished in the earlier stages of the worship as previously described. What one is now doing by this repetition is to reap the benefits of that worship and enter into a realization of the possibilities which it has opened up. Through this repetition of words you are simply establishing as an enduring habitual attitude of the total personality that adjustment to God which you have attained through worship. You are sealing, conserving, "nailing down" the benefits of that worship.

This repetition of words by which a personal attitude is established is the last stage in the complete act of worship. It should not be done with any sense of strain or anxiety, but in the spirit which the preceding worship has engendered.

We suggest the foregoing program as an experiment in personal religion. If you will try it every night just before retiring for three or four weeks we believe you will note some very marked results. We should like to have a report of such results, or their absence, from everyone who will practice this method as an experiment in personal religion.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did the current conception of God in early Old Testament times work against satisfying communion with him?
2. Why was there such emphasis upon sacred places and symbols?
3. Could a god thus geographically limited have ever been conceived as a universal deity?
4. Give examples of the way in which the prophets described their sense of communion with God.
5. What relation did this sense of communion with God have to their feeling of responsibility for some task?
6. What is the first essential to the cultivation of the religious life?
7. In what ways does the symbol of the cross help in religious meditation?
8. How has the reading of the Bible entered into the greatest Christian experiences of the past?
9. What external realities help you to feel religiously?
10. What do we mean by vision in religion today?

11. Can you name any characters outside the Bible, besides those mentioned in the study, who had these moments of vision and insight?

12. Why is time an essential to meditation?

13. Why is knowledge of God an essential to communion with him?

14. Why is solitude a condition of the most personal worship?

15. What does the author of Section IV mean by "taking life seriously"?

16. Have you tried any of the experiments in the cultivation of communion with God suggested?

17. If so, were you helped in the solution of some problem or difficulty?

Study III[1]

Religious Experience through the Influence of the Beautiful

I. *Introduction*

Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

So sings Keats, his emotions stirred as he contemplates a Grecian urn. It is because of the basic fact that there is a relation between beauty and truth, or, as the ancient Greeks expressed it, between the true, the beautiful and the good, that it is profitable to study the implications of experiences of the beautiful and religious experience.

As religion is experienced by numbers of persons, so that it is capable of typical generalizations, the religious life assumes various aspects. For example, the beliefs and the teachings of a group are intellectual in character. The practices of those making up the group are reflected in the ritual, the customs, and the social life. One may hear a sermon which through the didactic emphasis aims to secure as its result an enlightened intelligence. A leader may center his influence so that the moral relations of his followers are improved. The particular standards or customs of the denominational group may legitimately be used to realize desired results in behavior. In all such efforts the usefulness of that third aspect, the emotional values, is well known.

It was once necessary to defend the use of the emotional values in religion. Perhaps the emotions were stimulated too much or too grossly, or without desirable temperance or sanity. But this was the misuse, not the use, of the emotional value. No one would defend the sentimentalism of certain types of preaching, nor the intemperance of certain seizures which are cultivated by certain sects; but again these illustrate the misuse of the emotions.

The proper use of the emotional values in the religious experience is secured in a number of ways. Some religious persons respond to the beauty of the many sublime sections of Scripture. [Read the fourteenth

[1] The following persons have co-operated in the preparation of this study: Professor D. W. Riddle and Professor H. N. Wieman (see Table of Contents).

chapter of the Gospel according to John, "the heart of the New Testament," and test the effect; read several of the Psalms, or Isaiah, chapter 35, or I Corinthians, chapter 13, or Revelation, chapter 20.]

A spendid ritual may have a powerful effect upon persons of a certain temperament. Persons of this emphasis commonly have a high regard for symbolism of all sorts, so that in connection with their worship are vestments, candles, the burning of incense, and the procession of the Cross. Not all are especially sympathetic to this aspect of the organized religious experience, but those who appreciate it find it to be powerfully moving and beneficial.

Music has been used in connection with religious experience from the earliest times. Instruments, singing, and dancing were all used by the ancient Hebrews. The same was true of the Babylonians, who had a highly organized artistry in their splendid ritual. So, too, the Greeks developed and systematized music in their cult practices. The early Christians, as is typical of young movements, voiced their joys and hopes in song. Music formed an important part of the growth of the medieval Roman church; and when Luther led the Reformation it was one of his most effective flashes of insight which led him not only to use music, but to extend its use so that the congregation participated. Today in Protestant Christianity for most groups the hymn is of the first importance.

The use of such artistic expressions as painting and sculpture has been characteristic of some religious groups, while others have in some cases neglected or ignored it, and some have gone so far as to repudiate it. The ancient Hebrews cited the Second Commandment as the effective prohibition of such practices, but the Greeks developed painting, and more especially sculpture, to a high degree of excellence and an equally high effectiveness for religious use. Fortunately the Christians followed the Greek example at this point.

Again, the development of the religious use of architecture is an example of the proper use of the emotional appeal in religious experience. Some groups deliberately choose to worship among the very plainest surroundings, while others delight in making their places of worship beautiful. The high art of the Gothic cathedrals in medieval Europe illustrates the collective expression of religious devotion of Catholic Christianity, while the incomparably lovely parish churches of England no less witness the effect and the effectiveness of beauty upon the worshiper.

The science of aesthetics has demonstrated that there is an important relation between doing and feeling. It is not easy to explain why, but it is very evident as one notes the fact, that most persons significantly alter their behavior at the introduction of certain objects of beauty. For ex-

ample, in the various rooms of the Dresden Art Museum one sees the motley group moving from room to room in various attitudes of appreciation of what is to be seen. But however they may have been characterized by a lack of reverence in the main halls of the gallery, there is one small room in which, as they enter, there is an instinctive pause and hush. Conversation ceases, and all quietly find seats and with unmistakable reverence contemplate the work of art which is of such genius that its effect upon all who see it is profoundly religious. This is the Madonna of Raphael, which is known as the Sistine.

Or, again, one may not be able to explain why one behaves differently as he turns from the street with its rush of busy life and enters the cool quiet of an exquisitely ordered chapel, but such is a commonly observable fact. For example, in the French city of Rheims are even yet graphic and pathetic witnesses of war's destruction. As one sees the demolished homes, the wrecked Hotel de Ville, which is by careful plan once again assuming its wonted appearance, as one sees the too evident scars of shells on the exterior of the Cathedral, one lives again the rugged feelings of the days of war. But as one enters the Cathedral all this changes. It is not war, but peace, which rules; not turmoil, but quiet; not the shriek of shell, but the voice of gentle stillness. Although by all his attitudes and impulses one is Protestant, he reverently sits to meditate and quietly kneels to pray. One may not know why he feels and does thus, but however this may be his impressions and behavior seem to be perfectly natural and inevitable. So strong is the effect of beautiful surroundings.

II. *Examples from the Bible and Its Backgrounds*

The ancient Hebrews maintained their rejection of some of the typical forms of art within surroundings which as consistently cultivated them. By the time that the ancient Hebrews were growing in their rich treasure of religious development their neighbors were using many forms of art as means of assisting in the experience of religion. The splendid ruins of the temples of Egypt are mute witness to the height of the local development of architecture in this very early period. Find a picture of the great Temple of Karnak, and sense the magnificence of the pillars on whose tops more than one hundred men might stand. Or, to direct one's attention to the inscriptions, one recalls that much of the theology of the Egyptian faith may be understood through the pictorial representations. For example, the journey of the soul through the underworld, its judgment and its fate, are pictured on many a tomb or beautifully illumined upon many a papyrus.

For an example of the beauty of liturgy and of form of worship one

turns to Babylonia. When the Jews were in exile in Babylonia it is entirely likely that many of them saw the magnificent Procession of the Gods in which the images were accompanied down the sacred way by their priests in duly prescribed vestments, chanting the meticulously detailed liturgies, their voices blended with the sound of the musical instruments which also were held to be requisite to the service. It is doubtless no accident that when they returned from their exile their own liturgy was enriched by the greater splendor of vestments, song, and priestly customs.

To come nearer the home of the Hebrews, one will not overlook the objects which have been recovered by excavation of the homes of the Syrians, the Phoenicians, and the Philistines. The images of Astarte, we are told, bear relation both to those of the Sumerian Ishtar and the Greek Aphrodite (the Latin Venus). The artistic level increases with the nearness to the Greek forms. Doubtless it was exactly such images as these which met with the prophetic rebuke and the legal prohibition. (Read Exodus 20:4, Isaiah 40:9–20.)

As has been noted, the Hebrew and Jewish repudiation of painting and sculpture forms one of the most notable rejections of the use of art in the development of religious experience in the history of religion. It should not be supposed that by this repudiation it was decreed that all artistic media were rejected. Quite the opposite is true. The crowning glory of Hebrew and Jewish civilization bears characteristics which are never adequately expressed without the use of artistic evaluations: their literature ranks with the world's greatest art. These writings, when regarded as a whole or in part, bear out this judgment. For example, it is a sound impulse which has led many religious leaders to print the New Testament together with the Psalms, for the literary beauty of these secures an emotional appeal which valuably supplements the attitudes engendered by the spiritual excellence of the Christian literature. The appeal of the eloquent flight of the great prophet is similar: his spiritual appeal carried with it an emotional response which comes because of the beauty of his language and imagery (read Isaiah 40). Again, the quality which the Hebrew Scriptures contains to an unparalleled degree is illustrated by the natural manner in which their messages shade from prose into poetry, which, needless to say, is one of the highest of the arts (note in the American Standard Version how much is printed as poetry which in the King James version was printed as prose). For example, read the familiar Blessing of Jacob, from which the following is taken:

The sceptre never passes from Judah,
Nor ever the staff of sway,
Till he comes into his own,
And makes the clans obey.
He tethers his foal to the vine,
His colt to a rare red vine;
He washes his clothes in wine;
His robes in the juice of the grape!
His eyes are heavy with wine,
His teeth are white with milk.

—Gen. 50:10–12.

The intimate relation of literary form in the Hebrew Scriptures appears strikingly in another aspect—the song. In this case some of the finest examples in all literature appear. Primitive indeed, and yet effective, is the savage Song of Lamech, Gen. 4:23 f., the Song of Moses, Exod. 15:1–18, and of Miriam, Exod. 15:21 (read them in the order given). But doubtless the finest example of all is the Song of Deborah, Judg. 5:2–31, whose high art is unmistakable in the original and is effectively reflected in the American Revised Version and in such translations as those of J. M. P. Smith and of Moffatt.

As a matter of fact, the Hebrews and the Jews used many other artistic forms in the expression of their religion. The obvious example is their development of a priesthood and of a priestly service which ultimately led to the achievement of a highly developed temple and temple liturgy, in which artistic forms were assiduously cultivated. This is particularly true in Jewish life after the Restoration. Their first rebuilding of the House was easily recognized as meager in its size and beauty, but the residence in Babylon, in an environment of splendor and magnificence in public worship, had the inevitable effect that the Jewish priesthood steadily developed in the direction of a fuller liturgy and a more adequate priestly service. Consequently it is in this period that there occurred the production of a literature of unparalleled power, the Psalms. It is highly instructive to read these works with the purpose of finding what they reflect of the use of allied forms of art in securing their effects. Note the headings, if possible, in a modern translation: "From the Choirmaster's collection. To a string accompaniment." "For flutes." "For bass voices." "Set to a vintage melody." "To be used when incense is offered," etc. Their liturgical use is evident, for example, in the case of Psalm 95:

O Come, let us sing to the Lord,
Let us sing loudly to our saving Strength,
Let us come before him with thanksgiving,
Shouting to him songs of praise!

The effectiveness of the Hebrew Temple liturgy is shown in the fact that Isaiah, perhaps the greatest of the prophets, experienced his call to prophetic work when worshiping in the temple. Read the story in Isaiah, chapter 6, and note that as the tremendous experience is described, he "saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne; seraphs hovered round him, calling to one another,

Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts,
His majestic splendor fills the whole earth!"

What is commonly overlooked in this striking relation is that in it the scene is definitely located: in his vision of God "his trailing robes spread over the Temple floor," and as the vision was in progress "at the sound of the chant the foundations of the threshold shook, and the Temple began to fill with smoke." It was from the Temple altar that the seraph took the hot stone with which Isaiah's mouth was touched. So great a prophet met his mighty God in the temple as incense and offering were burned and the priests chanted their hymns!

This fact is emphasized because of the almost universal assumption that, after the mean temple of the Restoration was displaced by the truly remarkable work of beauty which Herod caused to be built, Jesus' so-called "cleansing of the temple" indicates his repudiation of it and all for which it stood. But does this follow? No one questions the fact that Jesus was a layman, without priestly or even scribal office. Nor does one question the prophetic quality of his life. But does it follow that he had no sympathy with those values which have been shown to be characteristic of the religious life into which he grew? It must be noted that various points of view are ascribed to Jesus. The same Gospels which picture his break with the law also state that he directed one whom he had helped to go show himself to the priest and make the offering prescribed by the priestly law. One of the Gospels mentions his frequent visits to the temple, and shapes one of his great discourses so that the entire point depends upon an incident connected with the cultus (John 7:2, 14, 37). There are several interpretations suggested in the Gospels of his cleansing of the temple, of which the one which suggests that Jesus' motive was to restore the proper function as a house of prayer for all the nations may likely be the correct one.

It is doubtless true that Jesus obtained his religious experience from

immediate relation with God, and that it was the beauty of nature rather than the beauty of liturgy which chiefly influenced him. But it should not be forgotten that Jesus was no inconoclast, and that Jesus' followers perhaps require means of religious inspiration and instruction which were not necessities to him.

III. *Examples from the Early Christians*

When one studies the experiences of the early Christians he must keep in mind that the area of their activities was much more largely Graeco-Roman than Palestinian. It follows that the rich artistic resources of the Graeco-Roman world formed an important part of their environment. That the Christians soon responded to these influences in their surroundings is evident from the fact that within a few decades the resources of sculpture and painting were used by the Christians in the adornment of their services. Perhaps the most beautiful, as well as the most instructive, example is the figure of the Good Shepherd; this figure which has been so universally loved in Christian art is the adaptation of the pagan Hermes. Even so, it is an adaptation for which the Christian world is grateful.

The Good Shepherd figure is only one of a multitude of artistic objects which came naturally into the ken of the early Christians. The representations which now fill the museums as the mere fraction of the wealth of art objects in the Graeco-Roman world recall what any representative city furnished as it became a center of a Christian mission. Perhaps the famous Zeus of Praxiteles is the best known, or, if not, the Athena of the Parthenon. But Winged Victory expresses even more power in its conception and execution, and the Ephesian Artemis, if not beautiful according to modern standards, was revered by many. Read Acts 19:23–41 and try to find pictures of these figures in textbooks of ancient history or in a history of art. It is not necessary to mention the statues of Eros and Psyche, of Hermes, or the many representations of the healing god, Aesklepios, nor, thinking of the Roman Pantheon, those of Jupiter, Mercury, or Neptune. It may be in point to call attention to the figures of Venus, for thousands visit the Louvre each year to see the Venus of Milo, and many also to see the Venus of Arles.

It must be emphasized that it was the common custom to adorn temples and other public places with such objects as these. They were not show pieces, as they are today; they were a part of the normal equipment of everyday life. And, lest one think thus exclusively of these remarkable examples, it will be remembered that every Roman home, no matter how humble, had its household images, the lares and penates.

Nor was sculpture the sole means of expression of the association of beauty with pagan religion. One needs but to visit the excavations of Pompeii to see with what effect the *motifs* of the contemporary religions were worked into the decorations of the home; as a result not only were the ordinary values of beauty conserved, but with them the values of religion.

Ancient architecture needs but the merest mention to have called to mind the influences with which the early Christians were surrounded. One thinks instinctively of the Parthenon of Athens and of the Pantheon of Rome; further reflection not only increases the list of remarkable examples, but suggests those several cases in which a pagan basilica was turned into a Christian church (compare the pictures of ancient public buildings in an ancient-history text).

That the early Christians responded to these influences is clear. One finds it to be true when he views those pathetic crypts where Christians buried their dead, inscribing upon the stones which covered them not only the pious wish phrased in the epitaph, but, with rough and crude technique, with symbols with which their faith might be pictured: the dove, the fish, and later, as artistic ability increases, that which is universally dear, the Good Shepherd.

The response may the clearer be seen as other examples of Christian art become available. In very early churches it is still often possible to see, after excavation has removed the débris of centuries of accumulation, representations in color of the most common concepts of Christian contemplation: the resurrection, the crucifixion, or Christ variously portrayed.

IV. *Examples from the Middle Ages*

During the Middle Ages many forms of the expression of the beautiful reached culmination. One needs to reflect only upon the status of such allied arts as painting, sculpture, and architecture to recall the glories of an age in which Michaelangelo, Leonardo (da Vinci), and Raphael were producing in all these forms, to be conscious of the great wealth of artistic resources and the immense influence of their work upon religion. It is well to remember, too, that this is an influence which is still being exerted.

The concrete illustrations which might be cited are legion. To mention only the barest few will suffice.

Leonardo's "Last Supper" has been reproduced in all sorts of copies, until it is one of the commonest of well-known subjects (refer to a copy which is available). But the cheapening which even a good reproduction

requires in not the slightest degree affects one who views the original fresco in the parish church of Milan. Even the erosion of time cannot yet rob the witness of the overpowering sense of the downright genius which the painting exhibits. This is a work which was placed upon the wall of the dining-hall of a monastery; it is difficult to imagine the effect upon those who habitually lived in association with so great a work.

Probably the most moving of all the Raphael paintings is the Sistine Madonna in the Dresden gallery, already mentioned. But there is a charm about another Madonna picture which is almost, if not quite, as powerful. In the Pitti Gallery of Florence is the frequently copied "Madonna of the Chair." Here is a work in which the cosmic other-worldliness of the Sistine is not present; on the contrary, here is a not unusual Italian girl with a not at all uncommon Italian baby, with a second baby to represent John the Baptist. But the absolute genius of the work is the simplicity of the conception of the whole group. The entirely common elements are made into a unity into which the person who views the painting joins, with the inevitable result that the simple painting preaches an unforgettable lesson: the brotherhood of all with this Child and his mother and his cousin.

When one thinks of Michaelangelo he thinks in succession of the several important paintings which this remarkable genius executed; more particularly of those frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. He thinks of the largest church of Christendom, the church which, begun long before Michaelangelo, was given its particular character when, as it was said, "By the inspiration of God" he was commissioned as its designer. But that which one might never forget is that seemingly almost living form which the youthful sculptor achieved from a cast-off block of marble: Michaelangelo's "David" is surely one of the most effective, as it is one of the most perfect, examples of sculpture. One cannot escape the feeling which moves him as he almost expects the flexed muscles of the arm to complete the motion which seems to have begun, and if one has aught of the Greek temper, he experiences a deep appreciation of the beauty and the power of the human body.

Time would fail were one to attempt to cite even the most obvious illustrations of the point which is being made. One other must, however, be included. In the monastery of St. Mark in Florence there once lived as a simple monk the man who became famous as a painter, Fra Angelico (read the reference to him in Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi"). But it was with no consciousness of any claim upon reputation which actuated this brother to adorn many of the walls of the monastery with frescoes which have at last made of the monastery a museum. In those efforts Fra

Angelico was simply expressing what was in him, with no thought that others than the brethren of the monastery would share the paintings. Perhaps this simplicity but adds to their power. At all events the effect cannot have been other than profound, for today, with all the atmosphere of the monastery dispelled and replaced by the commonness of the public gallery, the effect of, for example, the detail pieces of "St. Peter Martyr" and of "Christ Welcomed as a Pilgrim by Two Friars" is not lost.

This conveniently suggests the question, without further references to examples, of the purpose and the result of such work. Why did these painters produce these works? One important reason which was deliberately sought was that the paintings were substitutes for words in a world in which so few were able to read. The works of art taught, as we now would depend upon the printed page. It is this function which was so abundantly served, for example, by the thousands of subjects in the mosaics of St. Mark's in Venice. So, too, served the sculptures which adorned many an altar and many a narthex of the churches. So, too, mutely taught the stained glass of the windows. This was an influence of the most direct nature.

But doubtless the central reason was deeper than this. Without attempting to answer the question why, it is quite apparent that there was a relation between various aspects of this expression of religion in which the dramatic, the literary, and the liturgical values were fused into a unity. Such a unity would quite inevitably be served also by architecture and the plastic arts.

It was in the Middle Ages, too, that another aspect of the beautiful reached a climactic culmination in its service to religion. The drama of the mass (which in Protestant forms is preserved only in the small part which remains in the Lord's Supper) had reached a high point of development, so that in its content practically the same organization was used which is used at present. The dramatic values of the service were augmented by splendid equipment, so that effects were produced by the use of objects (altar, chalice, etc.), and vestments. To the same end music had long been included. But it remained for the Italian who is known as Palestrina to make of this part that of which it was capable. One can still on rare occasions find a choir which adds to its ability to sing such music the rare purpose to know and to make known some of the Palestrina motets and portions of the mass. (If you have access to a Victrola shop, ask to have some records of his music played.) Palestrina set into movement an influence which has produced some of the noblest music. One needs to mention, for example, such names as those of Mozart (the "Gloria" from the Twelfth Mass), of early modern date,

and of Gounod (the "Sanctus" from the St. Cecilia Mass) of our own period, to note the continuity of this profound influence. (These numbers may be heard from Victrola records.)

V. *Examples from the Later Periods*

It must not be supposed that the use made of the beautiful was confined to the Middle Ages, when architecture and plastic arts reached their classical expression, nor to the Eastern and the Roman churches, which have furnished the illustrations so far. On the contrary, the Church of England has achieved a tradition of the use of the beautiful in the service of religion which is second to no other group. To be sure, in architecture most of its great cathedrals belong to the pre-Reformation period, so that they owe their being to the Roman Catholic influence. However, this is not true without exception. It is possible to affirm, for example, that with the space, the materials, and the resources at his command, Sir Christopher Wren in St. Paul's of London has produced a work of art and of genius which may be compared with St. Peter's of Rome. Indeed, the London of today owes much of its charm to the churches designed by Wren. Too, in adapting the mass to Anglican necessities and in shaping it in the common tongue the liturgy of the Church of England lost none of its beauty. Indeed, it may be affirmed that it gained. The musical tradition of the Anglican church is worthy, with such names as Sullivan's and Stainer's, and in a feature yet to be mentioned in detail, that is, the production and the use of hymns in public worship, the Anglican church has never been surpassed, as is witnessed by the work of Keble, Charles and John Wesley, Dykes, Barnby, and Sullivan. (Find their hymns in a good hymnal.)

On the Continent, in the Reformation and its effects the artistic values had various fates. Luther had high appreciation; his translation of the Bible realized many of the standards of high literary excellence which are possessed by the original, many of the artistic concomitants of the mass were maintained, such as the altar with its characteristic decorations, vestments, and a liturgical service which preserved many of the dramatic elements of the Roman ritual. It was one of Luther's strokes of genius that in adapting congregational singing in the chorale form he restored one of the primary values which has slight place in the Roman service; in the Lutheran movement the hymn once more permitted the worshipper to express what was in him as the early Christians had expressed themselves. The Lutheran battle hymn:

A mighty fortress is our God
A bulwark never failing

is still sung. And as the Lutheran movement grew to the date when J. S. Bach was choirmaster in St. Thomas' Church in Leipzig, not only were such hymns produced as the lovely "O Sacred Head Once Wounded," but those works of genius, the settings of the Passion Story, enriched the literature of music. The best known of these is the "Passion According to St. Matthew." (In a good hymnal find as many of Luther's and Bach's hymns as are yet printed.)

It is unfortunately true that the Calvinistic churches did not utilize the beautiful in the service of religion. The primary value in Calvinism is the intellectual; this being true it was a natural corollary that the emotional values did not receive special emphasis, so that the neglect of artistic stimulation was natural. Consequently the Calvinist groups attempted to win their ends by rigorously narrowing expression to the severest plainness. Many prohibited the use of musical instruments and limited the musical expression of song to the biblical Psalms. A negative reaction which amounted almost to a fanatical iconoclasm led to the prohibition of images, which not only stripped churches of paintings and sculptures, but eliminated also almost all beauty in the design and arrangement of houses of worship. And it must be recognized this relegation of the influence of the beautiful to the background was accompanied by the considerable success of their propaganda. Religious groups can, if they choose, win a certain success without these means if they are willing to abide by the consequences.

VI. *The Present Situation*

Many religious groups in America are at present under some influence of this negative point of view. It must be admitted that while some few groups adequately cultivate the use of the beautiful, most meet in quite unbeautiful buildings, are by no means surrounded by beautiful objects, are without beautiful liturgical forms, and even express themselves in hymns which are anything but beautiful. But while this is true, it is also true that one of the most significant tendencies in contemporary religion is that which looks toward the enrichment of the service of worship by recovering and advancing the ancient status of the use of artistic means in architecture, decoration, music, and form of service. A definite movement is under way to include these values within the curriculum of religious education. To the service of this movement there are resources which are great, indeed. To be sure, the glory of classical art is in no modern renaissance, but the achievements in this field are not unworthy. Architecture is in a strengthened position. The wealth of musical resources is unparalleled. Some of the best of our hymns have been written

by contemporaries, for instance, "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life." But best of all our day is marked by a catholicity of spirit which adds to an intelligent consciousness of what is of value an eagerness to use that which is of beauty, whatever its source. Consequently we may presently find ourselves in a position to make significant advance in religious experience, and in our achievement we shall be greatly assisted by discovering the relation between the true, the beautiful, and the good.

VII. *Experiments in the Religious Experience of Beauty*

1. *The Religious Experience of Beauty*

There are four ways to experience beauty. One is the way of the aesthete; the second the way of the artist; the third the way of the moralist; the fourth, the religious way. The same person may experience beauty in all four of these ways at different times according to his mood. But he can scarcely have all four experiences at the same time; and generally he will experience beauty in one of these ways rather than the others unless he specially cultivates some other. We wish to suggest a method for cultivating the religious way of experiencing beauty. Our first step must be to clarify and distinguish the religious way as over against these others.

The aesthete finds an ecstacy in the experience of beauty which is for him the supreme good. He seeks nothing more; he wants nothing more. This state of feeling is the end result for him. He seeks beauty where it may be found, but he does not create it. He cultivates his capacity for his appreciation that he may enter more deeply into the experience. But he does nothing more about it. When he has attained the highest ecstacy there is nothing more save to prolong that state of feeling.

The experience of the artist is very different. He is inspired by beauty to create a beautiful object. The joy of beauty is for him constructive. It is the stern joy of wringing from out the raw materials of nature a thing of beauty. It may be beautiful sound, as in music, or beautiful movement, as in the dance, or beauty of rhythm and imagery, as in poetry. But there is a strenuosity and drive in the experience of the artist that is not found in that of the aesthete.

The moralist finds still another good in beauty. Beauty stirs him to strenuous and constructive endeavor. In this respect he is like the artist and different from the aesthete. But his endeavor is not with the materials of any fine art. It is with the materials out of which we construct the good life. Beauty helps him immensely in his endeavor to achieve

the good life. It makes the good life more alluring. When moral ideals are clothed in beauty, as in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, and in many songs and sermons, they inspire to moral endeavor as they could not do in any other guise.

But the most profound experience of beauty is religious. The aesthete misses it; so does the artist and moralist, except as these become religious. When we say that the aesthete, the moralist, and the artist must become religious in order to have the most profound experience of beauty, we do not mean that they must subscribe to any creed, nor join a church, although they might well do this. All we mean is that this most profound experience of beauty is religious, and he who has it thereby to that degree becomes religious.

What is this most profound and religious experience of beauty? We must try to indicate its character, at least to the point where it can be recognized.

In this most profound experience beauty makes us aware of a reality which is richer and deeper and more marvelous than anything we can dream or conceive. This reality is not anything we perceive in the beautiful object. It is not anything we fancy. We do not here refer to bright visions that may come to us as we listen to music or to a story or contemplate any other beautiful thing. This reality which enters our awareness when we are under the spell of beauty is quite unimaginable. It is beyond the reach of our dreams just as truly as it eludes our sentences. We feel it like a ghostly presence. It seems almost to be right there, and yet it is nowhere.

Two questions must be answered concerning this experience: (1) Is this sense of unimaginable reality an illusion? (2) In what sense and under what conditions is it religious?

Answer to the first question will be found through an examination of the psychology of this experience. In this profound experience of beauty the object is so formed and so contemplated that it arouses in us a multiplicity of plastic and subtle and tentative and novel responses. Now any response aroused in us which is strange and new, especially if it consist of a complicated interplay of many tentative and novel responses, will give us this sense of strange and wonderful and unimaginable reality.

The sense of unimaginable reality which comes to us in this psychological state is not an illusion if we understand this reality to be that wholly different world which would be ours if we so reconstructed ourselves and our environment that interaction between self and environment would be very different from what it now is. The spell of beauty

does not engender illusion because this profound religious experience of beauty is precisely the experience which makes a wholly different world possible. It does so because it arouses innumerable subtle, tentative, and novel impulses. These impulses provide the necessary psychological material out of which new and different habits can be formed. This possibility of new and different habits makes possible that reconstruction of self and environment which would bring about a different world. Since beauty engenders that psychological state out of which the required habits might be developed, it makes new and different and unimaginable worlds a genuine possibility. The psychological state induced in us by beauty is the first prerequisite to the achievement of a different world.

So we conclude that the sense of unimaginable reality which comes to us under the spell of beauty is not an illusion if it be regarded as awareness not of something actual, but of something possible.

In the presence of great beauty one becomes as a little child. A little child is capable of great modification of behavior and development. Therefore the doors of possibility stand wide open before him. With advancing age these doors close one after another. But the religious experience of beauty, by arousing many plastic, novel, and tentative impulses, preserves our youth. It keeps us plastic. It preserves and it restores our capacity for growth and for multiform adaptability. It opens many a door that was closed even for the child. It causes the man to turn and become as a little child; and thereby his entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven becomes a possibility. Beauty does truly usher us to the borderland of unexplored reality.

But we have not yet explained how this experience is religious. Merely to become aware of genuine but unimaginable reality is not in itself religious. It becomes religious only when one goes forth to seek that new and different world by living the life of faith.

The life of faith may mean either one of two things: It may mean waiting in the hope that death will take us into that other world; or it may mean the aggressive search and striving for the ways and means by which to achieve that other world here on earth. This search and striving requires experimental ventures in ways of conducting one's life, which is one form of faith. Also it means searching after the best relations with God, because God is that factor or character in the universe which will bring the best possible world into actuality when we establish the required relations with him. We know God will do that because God is that by definition. No matter how one conceives God, he always thinks of God as that particular being who will bring the greatest good to mankind when men establish right relations with him.

Therefore we say the experience of beauty is religious when it does two things: (1) when it gives us a sense of richer, deeper reality than we can conceive or imagine, but a reality which constitutes a truly possible world; (2) and when it inspires us to shape our whole lives in such a way as to make that adaptation to God through which the best unattained but possible world shall be brought into existence.

How does this differ from morality? In morality we strive to do what we know is right. Religion includes that, but goes on beyond it. Morality is trying to live according to the best ideals of this world. But the religious living which issues from the experience of beauty tries to discover the ideals of that other possible world, which may be wholly different from the ideals of this world.

The aesthete, the artist, the moralist, and the prophet all find their inspiration and their insight in beauty. Beauty stirs them each to a strange unrest and sets them to climbing toward high places. The aesthete climbs toward that ecstacy which awaits the sensitive soul in the presence of beauty. The artist climbs toward the creation of those forms that come to haunt him after beauty has visited him. The moralist climbs toward those ideals which beauty has rendered radiantly alluring. But the religious prophet climbs a path more perilous, more mysterious, than the others. He goes forth in the attempt to wring from out the immensities of the universe that other world, wholly different from this, which visits him in ghostly presence when he gazes on the face of beauty.

2. *How Beauty Leads to God*

Beauty is not confined to works of art. Art provides us with only a small part of the beauty of the world. Nature, including unpremeditated human behavior, is full of beauty. The most profound and stirring beauty steals upon us unawares without the intervention of human handiwork. Just as we pass around the point of a hill we perceive for the first time a tree standing in a meadow with the autumn haze beyond it and clinging dimly about it, and we are face to face with beauty. Or we pass through a strange dense wood and suddenly come upon a waterfall, the foaming water plunging from a granite height, a little rainbow at the foot, and there in the dark pool a great globule of scarlet reflected from a flower upon the bank. Or we lift our eyes to the cold blue mountains in the distance, their peaks streaked with gleaming white, and for a moment the ecstacy is ours.

The beautiful object, whether of art or nature, not only opens to us the vast realm of possibility. It also makes us aware of the depth of richness in the concrete actual world, and does this beyond any other

kind of experience. The beautiful object is so fashioned that we can be simultaneously responsive to its many different parts and qualities. The ordinary object which is not beautiful, or the beauty of which is not appreciated, has only one or two features to which we react. We ignore it in all respects save those one or two qualities in it which happen to make it useful to us. The ugly object, on the other hand, has many different features to which we react; but our responses conflict, one tending to inhibit the other. Only the beautiful object is so formed that we can respond to its many parts and qualities all at once and yet do so without inner conflict or distress.

Thus beauty makes us aware of the rich fulness of the actual as well as the great realm of possible worlds. For this reason it brings us into intimate association with God. For God is that which (1) gives the rich fullness of reality to the actual world and (2) determines the scope and limitation of the possible transformations which this actual world can undergo. Whoever discerns the richness and depth of the actual world, and also the realm of possible worlds into which this actual world can be transformed, is very close to God. Since beauty gives us this experience it brings us into the presence of God. It can do this, however, only when we have that profound experience which we have described as the religious experience of beauty. The aesthete, the artist, and the moralist, unless they undergo this religious experience, do not have that awareness of unimaginable reality which constitutes the religious significance of beauty.

3. *A Personal Experiment with Beauty*

Seek out that form of beauty that stirs you most deeply. For most people, perhaps, great music will do this best. Before going into the presence of beauty prepare yourself by worship. Go where you can be completely alone. Relax and try to sense the all-encompassing presence of God. Remember that in adaptation to him you may attain to wholly unknown possibilities of good. Then examine yourself to discover what readjustment of your total personality is needed to enter into the fullest possible appreciation of that beauty which you are shortly to experience. Repeat quietly and trustingly many times this required readjustment. Then end the season of worship in the state of passive relaxed awareness of God. Having thus prepared yourself, go to that place where you can surrender yourself to the most profound experience of your chosen form of beauty. After it is past note whether you had in any way or to any degree the sense of unimaginable reality which has been described. Has it deepened your sense of the presence of God? Does it increase the zest and eagerness of your quest of a better world?

To complete the experiment you should make your life a great venturesome search for that other possible world, wholly different from this, which hovered so mysteriously near you under the magic spell of beauty. But such an experiment would far exceed the scope of a short course like this. Only after centuries have passed can the result of such an experiment be reported. Only when ages are done shall we fathom the mysterious possibility that beauty brings so dimly near.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Name several channels through which the beautiful has influenced religious experience in the past.
2. What limitation upon the use of beauty was contained in the constitution of the Hebrew religion?
3. In what field of artistic expression do they stand unrivaled?
4. In what special realm of beauty did Jesus seem to find greatest religious inspiration?
5. What seems to you the significance of the fact that the early Christians used sculpture and painting in adorning their worship?
6. Name some of the great artists whose work glorified religion in the Middle Ages.
7. What are the most common themes of the art of this period?
8. What forms of art other than sculpture and painting entered into the religious life of the Middle Ages?
9. State some of the changes which the Protestant Reformation brought in the association of the artistically beautiful with religion.
10. Does it seem to you that our modern churches fail to understand and to appreciate sufficiently the ministry of art in religion? If so, in what ways?
11. What is your own response to the beauty of liturgy?
12. What is your response to the influence of hymns participated in by the congregation?
13. What is your response to the ministry of other music in the church service?
14. To what extent do you think that the beauty of architecture in church buildings affects the congregation and the community?
15. In what four ways may beauty be "experienced" and what are the limitations and advantages of each?
16. When is the experience of beauty religious?
17. Why does the influence of the beautiful bring us close to God?
18. Did you attempt the experiment suggested? If so, in relation to what form of beauty and what result did you observe?

Study IV[1]

Religious Experience through the Struggle of Life

I. *Introduction*

All life is an apprenticeship to the truth that around every circle a larger circle may be drawn; that there is always something more to be attained; that it is worth while to put forth effort in the attempt to win the greater good. The place which one has reached at any stage of the journey is only a part of the way to the goal, and it requires energy and persistence to win through to the end. Nothing is gained without struggle. This is one of the advantages which life offers to any individual of purpose and decision. It is only people of indifferent nature who are willing to take time's gifts and make no determined effort to achieve fresh advantage for themselves, or make a suitable contribution to the social order about them. Struggle is the normal estate of all living things. It appears to be one of nature's basic laws that, whether in the physical or spiritual realm, nothing that is worth having or being is gained without cost.

1. *Struggle a biological necessity.*—In the biological realm this law is of universal application. The beginnings of life are marked by pain and effort. No physical organism is brought into being without struggle. And every stage of growth is attended with the same forth-putting of energy. Much of this is unconsciously released. The growing child is intensely and incessantly active. His play usually takes on the form of effort to work with his environment by lifting, pushing, pulling, and otherwise controlling the objects he can touch. His releases of energy take for the most part the direction of attempts to master the materials of his world. Every action demands the play of muscles, the tug against obstacles, the struggle to overcome resistance. This is all part of the essential process of gaining strength and control. Every output of energy is a help in the attainment of health and physical well-being. Even the crying periods of the child, when there seems to be no particular occasion, are probably valuable as releases of energy and emotion. They may have no relation

[1] The following persons have co-operated in the preparation of this study: Professor Herbert L. Willett and Professor H. N. Wieman (see Table of Contents).

to hunger, pain, or any other kind of actual discomfort. They are a part of nature's technique of growth.

This process of development by effort never ceases as long as there is life and the will to attain fresh values in experience. Every habit acquired demands at first some deliberate expenditure of power, some attempt to bring untrained muscles to the performance of a new action. This may be pleasurable or it may be laborious. In either case it involves a measure of struggle, and probably at first of failure. There will no doubt be many failures before the mastery is gained, and the habit becomes fixed. All the physical acts of life that come to be habitual and unconscious begin with this discipline of effort. They are patterned on the principle of trial and failure, and at last of trial and success. A child's early efforts to creep, then to walk, and at last to run are attended with much struggle and many failures. Much more difficult is the acquisition of speech. Motion is the first form of expression. The child points to the things he wants but cannot name. Then he begins to break into vocal expression, not with words, but with a series of sounds which represent objects and ideas to him, and which those around him come to recognize. At last he forms real words, and this is a long step in his mental as well as his physical growth. And there is struggle all the way up this path.

2. *Struggle a means of adjustment to environment.*—This process of gaining strength, skill, and control is the effort after adjustment with one's environment. A growing measure of this adjustment is essential to life. A living organism that fails to secure such relation to its world cannot survive. All life is in reality an attempt to secure this friendly relationship with the world. A tree thrusts down its roots into the soil, pushing its tendrils among the rocks to gain every advantage of contact, moisture, and nourishment. It lifts its branches and puts out its leaves to breathe in the air and the light. Every order of creatures learns by experience and inheritance to establish connection with its environment. This can only be accomplished by constant watchfulness and effort. Such a struggle becomes instinctive. The search for food, the mating quest, the preparation of a home, the unceasing precaution to avoid danger, are parts of the endless exertion necessary to preserve life and pass it on to the next generation.

Some of this struggle is pleasurable and some is painful. The joy of any form of physical exercise is a commonplace. Men and animals share the exhilaration of putting forth strength, overcoming difficulties, mastering the forces of nature. There is a thrill in the feeling of ability to run swiftly, to swim easily, to climb tirelessly. In such a state of bodily competence the consciousness of adjustment is complete, and happiness is the

result. But there are struggles in which pain is involved, which are still a means of securing harmony with life. One may climb a mountain, not for the joy of the effort, but for the reward of the view at the top, and count the exertion worth the while. Or one may perform the still more arduous task of winning to the top of some difficult peak, which is not to be scaled short of an extreme effort, and find even the labor and hardship of that adventure a rewarding experience. The struggle has its value in each case in proportion to the object to be attained, whether the love of the exercise, the aesthetic delight of the mountain view, or the sense of mastering a difficult and dangerous ascent. Each of these is an adjustment to various levels of environment, physical, emotional, or intellectual.

3. *Struggle essential to character and influence.*—As a means of developing character effort is indispensable. Nothing worth while in the making of personality is to be acquired without struggle. Any individual who is unwilling to pay the price of hard and consistent work is doomed to a flaccid and flabby kind of existence that is as incapable of useful effort as it is of true satisfaction. It requires a degree of assiduous toil at the enterprises one regards as worthful to give firmness and assurance to any life. Habits of industry, thrift, honesty, loyalty, friendliness do not come at call. They demand untiring application and practice to take a commanding place in character.

But the value of struggle does not cease with its reflex influence on the individual in his adjustment to life or his attainment of ability and firmness. It is of prime importance in the accomplishment of his work in the world, whatever that may be. Very few lives are solitary. Humanity is a complex of social beings, whose reactions upon each other are constant and full of significance. Usually a man is of moment in proportion to the influence he exerts over other people. In few instances is that influence unrelated to definite effort. Most men's lives are struggles to make other people share their views, purchase their commodities, or join their organizations. Whether as merchants, physicians, teachers, lawyers, journalists, ministers, or authors, their success lies in their ability to convince their clients that they have mastered the problems which are of chief concern at the moment, and are thus competent to help them.

4. *The value of struggle, irrespective of success or failure.*—Moreover, the sort of effort which is here described is essential to all life without regard to the success or failure of the attempt. At first it appears tragic that so many efforts to achieve success fail of result. The proportion of business men who fail is surprising and disillusioning, particularly when one considers that the business man in America is regarded as the embodi-

ment of sound judgment and dependable experience. The number of men in the vocations that wholly fail or barely escape failure is disconcertingly large. The tragedies of disappointed hopes, of confident expectations unrealized, are very many. The causes for these failures are too numerous to be tabulated here. The problem of failure, suffering, evil, is one of the most far-reaching and poignant in all human experience. But that requires a different treatment, and is not the subject of this study. The point demanding emphasis here is that struggle, whether it issues in happiness or suffering, in joy or pain, in success or failure, is essential to life, and cannot be shirked save at the expense of harmony of being, the winning of character, and any hope of the attainment of cherished goals. Granting all the instances of failure, acknowledging all the chances of defeat, still the only possible pathway to peace leads that way. It is vastly better to strive and be baffled and beaten than to yield without effort. There is something noble in the overthrow of a hero who fights to the end, but only ignominy in the cowardice of the craven who runs away. The struggle itself is a kind of victory, no matter what the issue. There are few characters, outside the pages of romantic fiction, which show the tokens of unvarying good fortune. Perhaps that is the reason why romantic success is alluring in the drama or the novel. In comparison the ordinary career is rather sombre and unexciting. But there is a reasonable amount of success in most lives, and after all it is the effort that discloses the sort of stuff of which men are made.

II. *Examples from Biblical History*

The Bible is the world's great picture gallery. Almost every sort of experience is set forth in some familiar example. That is the reason why it possesses such perennial interest for those in search of instruction or merely seeking for entertainment. It is eloquent on the theme of human struggles. It tells many stories of those who attempted and failed, of those who partly failed and partly succeeded, and of those whose careers were crowned with complete success.

At the very beginning of the biblical record there is the tradition of the man who lived on both sides of the deluge, and saw a new world ushered in after that catastrophe. Whatever factual value this story of Noah may possess, it admirably illustrates the quality of strenuous and unfaltering effort in the face of blind and stupid prejudice and opposition. Read the account of the deluge in Gen. 6:9—9:19, and for the interpretative reference to Noah as a "preacher of righteousness," II Pet. 2:5. Through the long years of indifference and rejection this man kept on his way as a herald of the divine message, and warned his fellow-men

of the impending wrath of God that should presently bring a flood of water to destroy all living things. Yet there was no response, and at last he had to witness the entire futility of his long-continued struggle to bring in a better order of life. He is the first example of a preacher who completely failed. The saving of his own life may well have seemed small compensation for his unrewarded efforts.

The ministry of Hosea, the prophet of Samaria, as told in the book which bears his name, is an authentic recital of a career marked by tragic suffering, unwearied attempt to persuade his people to better things, and at last complete failure to accomplish his purpose. His unhappy personal experience with a wife of wayward nature made him conscious of the similar problem of God in dealing with unfaithful Israel. Read Hosea, chapters 1–3, and consider whether this was an actual occurrence in Hosea's life, or a parable used by him in his preaching. Then note in a rapid glance through the remaining chapters of the book the earnest, pathetic pleadings of the prophet to the people to abandon their idolatrous, selfish lives, and to return to the God who was waiting, like a forgiving husband, to pardon their sins. But all this preaching, which may well have extended over several years, proved in vain. It was but a short time later that the land where Hosea had labored, and the city he loved, were overrun by the invading Assyrians, and the hope of amendment perished. The only survival of these struggling years of the prophet is the book which has proved of such interest to the modern student.

But perhaps the most conspicuous instance of struggle and failure in the Old Testament is found in the career of Jeremiah of Jerusalem. His long ministry began in the happy days of the good King Josiah the reformer, and ended in the dark times of Jerusalem's destruction and the beginnings of the exile. Read Jeremiah, chapters 1, 2, for the record of Jeremiah's call to the prophetic work and the beginnings of his preaching. As a man of God who was fearless in his denunciation of idolatry and the evil manners of the time, Jeremiah was unpopular at the court of the King, and his messages were scorned. Read chapter 36 as an example of the royal attitude toward him, and the constant peril in which he was placed. Sometimes his life was actually in danger, as in the story of chapter 38, and only by the help of friends was he saved. After nearly half a century of this living martyrdom he was carried away, reluctant and protesting, to spend his last days with a group of refugees who fled to Egypt from the anticipated wrath of the Babylonians. Read chapter 43. No career could seemingly be more futile than that of this unhappy prophet. His life was a constant struggle against the forces of corrupt politics and religion as represented in Judah. Yet that very struggle made him one of

the noblest of Israel's prophets, a living example of the sacrificial and redemptive life.

Then there are the narratives of the lives that were marked by failure and success, but in both failure and success display the clear evidences of earnest struggle. Jacob the patriarch is an example of this mingled evil and good fortune. As a youth in the home at Beersheba he had all the advantage of a favorite son. But by sharp practice against his brother and his father he lost that favored place, and went out as a refugee from his home. Read Genesis, chapters 27, 28. With that moment his easy life ended, and he had to struggle for survival and a competence. In his sojourn in Padan-Aram he encountered one difficulty and disappointment after another. It looked like a struggle without value. It was only after his departure from the north and his return to the borders of his homeland, still a struggler and a wrestler with impending disaster, that he began to find the upward way. In the last days of his career he came out on the highlands of peace, and passed into an honored age. But his entire history is one of peril and rescue, failure and success, and always of struggle, sometimes the outcome of his own misadventures, but also the key to his ultimate success.

The life of David, the epic hero of ancient Israel, was marked by the same mingled elements of success and failure, but was from first to last illustrative of the necessity and the value of struggle. As a youth in the home in Bethlehem his was the rough task of tending a flock of sheep on the uplands of Judah, in all weathers and in dangers from wild beasts. Read I Sam. 17:12–14, 34–36. From the time of his arrival at the camp and court of Saul, the king, he put his most earnest efforts into the service of his master, winning for him victories and comforting him in his times of depression. Read I Sam. 16:14–23; 18:10–16. In spite of his loyalty and valor, however, he incurred the increasing suspicion and hatred of Saul, was compelled to escape for his life, and for many months wandered with his followers in the wilds of the south. Read I Samuel, chapters 19, 23, 24. Compelled at last to leave the land of Israel altogether, he and his men took service under the King of Gath. But even in the frontier town of Ziklag, to which he has been assigned, he suffered the loss of family and possessions at the hands of raiders, and only won them back after a most difficult pursuit. Read I Samuel, chapters 27, 30. Thus far his life seemed to be a constant struggle for existence in the midst of hostility and peril. Yet even in that hard school of adversity he acquired the virtues of self-discipline, patience, and trust in God which were to determine so largely his character and success in the future.

To the end of his career, which merited the applause of all the later

generations, David had to contend with enemies on all sides, with plots in his own family, and with his own unruly passions and superstitions. Read II Samuel, chapters 8, 12, 15–18, 21. But in spite of these difficulties, misfortunes, and mistakes his struggles brought him at last to the supreme place in the affection and reverence of his people. Chastened by misfortune, humiliated by tragedies in his own household, rebuked for his sins by his own subjects, he won through at last to a commanding place among the rulers of his time. His shadow is cast far down across the history of Israel. And no higher honor could be imagined for the Messiah by the Jews of Jesus' day than that he should be known as the son and heir of David. See Matt. 22:41–45. Was his life a success or a failure? There were many times when he stood perilously near the edge of disaster, physical or moral. But taking his life in its totality, and judging him by the standards of his age, he reveals a noble nature and a high regard for the ideals of civilization and religion. And much of this character was due to the struggles through which he passed on his way from the sheepfold to the throne.

The first of the prophets who have left to us the actual words of their messages to the people was Amos of Tekoa, a farmer of Judah, who may well be called the first foreign missionary. He probably arrived in the cities of the northern kingdom as a seller of his farm products in the prosperous reign of Jeroboam II (781–40 B.C.). But he remained to preach a message of stern judgment upon the inhabitants of the cathedral city of Bethel, and the capital, Samaria. He secured the attention of the street crowds by predicting early disaster to some of the nearby non-Israelite towns that were rivals for their trade. Then he turned with stern rebuke to denounce the sins of the people before him—injustice in the courts, formalism in worship, drunkenness and licentiousness, and the misuse of office, both secular and sacred, for private profit. Read Amos, chapters 1, 2.

The remainder of the book gives the substance of the sermons of this prophet that have survived to us. He spared no harsh words in his attempt to bring home to his hearers the responsibility and danger under which they rested. Much more was expected from them, he told them, than from heathen peoples without the law. He held before them the threat of Assyrian advance and invasion as a chastisement for their selfish and luxurious lives. Did he succeed in his attempt to bring in a better order of life in the kingdom of Israel? It is little likely that he did. Like the man who was partly his contemporary and partly his successor in the prophetic ministry, Hosea, he seems to have failed, at least in securing any immediate results from his labors. One dramatic episode shows what the officials of Bethel thought of him. Amaziah, the presiding priest at

the sanctuary, called him to task for his caustic references to the royal family, the morals and religion of the place, and the impending judgments of God upon it. He insisted that he leave the city and return to his own country of Judah, where he would be quite at liberty to preach and take his collections, which the priest insinuated were his chief concern. In high indignation Amos resented the insult and poured fresh condemnation upon the head of the haughty ecclesiastic. Read Amos 7:10–17. But it is not probable that the most favorable opinion could have pronounced the work of the prophet a success. In a few years at the most that city was taken by the foreign foe, and its people scattered far and wide. It could have been little satisfaction to the prophet in his mountain home in Judah to hear of the tragic fulfilment of his warning. What he had sought was the repentance of the people, and they had turned away to invite with careless spirits the disaster that overtook them all too soon. Yes, the struggle of Amos to bring Samaria and Bethel to a better mind must be counted a failure. But the words of the prophet, disregarded by his own generation and the nation to which he carried his tidings of rebuke and impending judgment, have gone to the ends of the earth as the oracles of God to other lands and centuries, and are among the most stirring of messages of social righteousness to our own age. The arduous and baffling struggle of the prophet with the pride and worldliness of Israel has been like seed cast upon the waters, whose fruitage comes after many days.

The greatest preacher Jerusalem ever knew was Isaiah. To him that city was the most glorious in the world, the seat of the divine government on earth, the holy place of the Most High. He was a statesman of the true type. He possessed all the advantages of culture and social station which his age afforded. He had the entrée to the royal household, was on terms of familiarity with such kings as Jotham and Hezekiah, and at times it could have been said of him that he "molded a mighty state's decrees and shaped the whisper of a throne." His eloquence drew crowds to hear him, and in certain crises of the nation's life he held the mob of Jerusalem in his hand, as Savonarola swayed the crowds in the Duomo in Florence, or Bossuet held spellbound his audiences in Notre Dame. Through forty years he preached in the cloisters of the temple or in the public places of the capital. If any prophet ever had an opportunity to do great things for a city and a nation, it was Isaiah. And without doubt his influence was very far-reaching. It can hardly be questioned that visitors from other lands carried back to their homes the reports concerning the great statesman-prophet of Judah. His appearance on the streets of Jerusalem was an event of interest to all who passed.

Moreover, he achieved a marked degree of success. At moments of emergency he saved the rulers of Judah from serious mistakes. His judgment was respected by the best leaders of the time. It was only when contending factions in the palace, paid lobbyists of Assyria or Egypt, obscured the truth with their clamor and contentions that the prophet was disregarded. No doubt such times were frequent and distressing to the seer. He was interested not merely in the strategy of a present success, but in the moral uplift of his people, and their religious amendment. His was a constant struggle against the corruptions of official Jerusalem, and the vices of a pleasure-loving populace. There must have been many days of weariness and nights of waking as he pondered his immense task and the seeming futility of all his effort. For one brilliant moment at the last he stood forth as the deliverer of the city that he loved. Read Isa. 36, 37. But after that he passed into the shadow, and later report rumored that in the dark days of Manasseh he suffered martyrdom. Would Isaiah's life have been counted a success by the men of his generation? Probably it would. If not, then no prophet ever won success. But the real success of Isaiah's ministry lay in his unceasing attempt to bring in a better age. He counted his position and his great gifts, not as prizes to be grasped and retained, but only as means to the accomplishment of his life's purpose, the redemption of Zion from her sins, the cleansing of the nation from unrighteousness. At that mighty enterprise his success was small. His insistence that Jerusalem was indispensable to the divine purpose, and was inviolate until her mission was accomplished, seemed justified by immediate events. For the city did not fall into the hands of the Assyrians in 701 B.C., when threatened by Sennacherib. But the seeds of its destruction were already sown and the crash came a century later. The success of Isaiah lay not so much in the immediate outcome of his work as in the struggle of his life to carry on in the face of sinister odds. That kind of life is victorious, no matter what the present issue may be. It is the struggle itself that spells victory, first in the soul of the hero, and then in all the outreaches of his life, the people and interests which he touches. No wonder that in spite of his defeats and martyr death at last, later generations hailed him as the greatest of the prophets, and fragments of prophetic lore, unmarked by any name, came to be gathered under his sheltering arm.

When one attempts to list the biblical characters that afford illustration of the value of struggle, whether the issue was success or failure, the names crowd in too fast for mention, much less for comment. Two more demand consideration: Paul and Jesus. These are naturally the supreme examples. The great apostle holds a unique place among the friends and

interpreters of the Lord. He was not of the Twelve, and when he left his own social and academic group to attach himself to the fortunes of the Nazarene he left everything. There is something pathetic about the loneliness and friendlessness of the man of Tarsus as he went about the world or took up his ministry in the cities of the empire, asking only for the companionship of the Christ whom he adored.

Christ! I am Christ's, and let the name suffice you,
Yea, for me too he greatly hath sufficed.
Aye, with no winning words I would entice you;
Paul has no honor and no friend but Christ.

Yes, without love of sister or of daughter,
Yes, without stay of father or of son;
Lone on the land, and homeless on the water
Pass I in patience till the work be done.

The very keynote of his life was struggle. The early tasks mastered in the Cilician home; the competent scholarship attained in the university at Jerusalem; the winning of his rabbiship in some provincial city; his return to Jerusalem and indignation at the growing heresy of the Nazarenes; the contest with Stephen and the meaning of his martyrdom; the struggle on the way to Damascus, and the shock of the great disclosure; the heroic and agonizing break with all his past, and the pathos of his isolated position, hated by Jews, suspected by Christians; the silent years of preaching in his own homeland; and then the long years of eager and passionate advocacy of a cause everywhere spoken against—these are but the briefest hints of the life of untiring effort he spent in the service of the Master, only to have it cut short at the very moment when he felt he was really beginning his work. Of course he did not take very seriously the physical hardships and dangers he encountered in the course of his ministry, though he names a few of them with the half-humorous hint that he may be thought to be boasting. Read II Cor. 11:21–33. But it would be hard to discover a career which was more constantly the target for misunderstanding, hostility, misrepresentation, and persecution than his. There must have been many days when Paul counted all his efforts in vain, and believed that he had failed of winning every goal. Only two things sustained him: the consciousness of the supreme effort he had made to achieve his purpose, and the joy of knowing that the Master understood and approved.

Was Paul's life a success? No one who witnesses his enormous influence on Christian thought or marks his conspicuous place in Christian history can question. But what did Paul himself think when he was let

down in a basket from the unfriendly walls of Damascus, or was beaten by Jews and scourged by Romans, or was floating on bits of wreckage in the Aegean Sea, or was chafing against the bonds that held him from his work in prison in Caesarea or Rome? It is only in the light of the completed task that an audit can be made. It is so of any life. The struggle to achieve is already half of the victory. If Paul's story had been lost from the history of the church, he would still have won in spite of all his suffering. It is neither success nor failure that puts the final estimate upon life. It is the effort put forth, the strain endured, the attempt made, the struggle carried through that counts. Neither pain nor pleasure is an objective, but life itself, character, nobility, the mind of Christ, the spirit of God.

Not enjoyment and not sorrow is our destined end or way.

There is no need to review the life of our Lord in order to discover the same underlying facts. We know his life only in the most meager way. The four Gospels afford but a few leading facts. Yet these few are sufficient to assure the reader that the work undertaken by Jesus was the most serious ever attempted by man. That of Paul seems enormous when one considers that it involved nothing less than the transformation of the Roman Empire from its paganism to the Christian ideal. But the mission of Jesus was to provide a new spirit and purpose for all religions and for every century. The work of Paul was for that century and the various classes in the Empire. The essential Gospel of Jesus is for every age and all mankind. How much more, therefore, was struggle involved in the work of Jesus! Perhaps we miss something of that stressful and urgent note in his career by reason of the very quietness with which he went about his mission. The prophet's words quoted regarding the bruised reed and the smoking flax seem to apply most appropriately to his method. See Isa. 42:3, Matt. 12:20. But every hour of his life, so far as we are able to find the facts, was marked by a struggle to learn the Father's will, and then to remove the obstacles to its accomplishment.

We have brief and partial intimations of the struggles through which Jesus passed in his own soul: in such hours as those of the temptation, which was less an episode than a recurring phase of his inner experience; of his efforts to be understood by his mother and other members of his family; of his long quest for suitable disciples who were able to understand his ideals, and then his repeated and painful efforts to lead them into some measure of comprehension of his program; of his controversies with various groups of opponents there is some record; of his sympathetic efforts to help the people who gathered about him in such throngs and

craved of him so many sorts of aid; and of his final struggles to overcome the sharpness of death, the horror of the cross, the shame of such an end, and the awful agony of loneliness when it seemed that even the Father had forsaken him. Then too it must be remembered that traditional Christianity, by its insistence upon the supernatural aspects of Jesus' life, robbed it of much of its reality, and made it a pageant rather than an experience. To enter with sympathy into the story of Jesus is to discover immense areas of struggle in his daily effort to adjust himself to his supreme task, and to meet the emergencies which almost every hour presented.

Of the enterprise which Jesus essayed, the common verdict at the close of his life was that it had failed. The disciples themselves were of that mind. The saddest words in the New Testament are those uttered by the grief-stricken two on the way to Emmaus, "We hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel." Luke 24:21. They did not love or trust him less than before. They simply knew that he had failed. And that haunting phantom of doubt had been in the Master's mind from the days in the wilderness, and particularly under the olives in Gethsemane. What if, after all his effort, his struggles, and his sufferings, the world were to refuse to take seriously his message and his way of life? If that doubt dwelt in the heart of Jesus and those of his nearest friends, who shall wonder if the man on the street thought it all a pathetic and wasted effort? As the ancient singer of the exile wrote, "Who believed the report that came to us, and to whom was the arm of the Lord revealed?"

We know today, and the disciples came to know in the months that followed, that he had not failed, but had achieved a success greater than any of them had dreamed. Yet apart from the triumph of the truth he proclaimed was the meaning of the struggle through which he went in the attainment of his purpose, and all men have been the stronger since that day by reason of this determined and persistent purpose of his to win through for the sake of all the rest. The value of struggle has been proved by him past all doubt. He is the elder brother of the race, and has made clear the way for all. In spite of question and doubt he, for the joy that was set before him, undertook the great adventure, and was made perfect through struggle and suffering. In that way alone is any man made perfect. To make that secret known to the world was one of the victories Jesus won for mankind.

The Bible also has many examples of those who struggled and won complete success. Of a few of them the mere mention is sufficient. Experiences of this nature are of interest, and they satisfy a certain dramatic emotion in most people. But they are not of so much significance in the

spiritual education of the race. Such names as those of Deborah, the mother of Israel, who as judge and leader gained freedom for her people (Read Judg. 4, 5); Samuel, the last of the judges and one of the first of the prophets (Read I Sam. 1–3); the Isaiah of the exile, whose words are found in Isa. 40–55, and whose influence upon the scattered Jews in Babylonia must have been profound (Read Isa. 40); and Nehemiah, who brought order out of confusion in the post-exilic age, and rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 1, 2); these and others like them are of the glorious company of those who struggled and succeeded, and are worthy to be found in such a list as that cited by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in his roll-call of the heroes of the faith. See Heb. 11:32–34.

III. *Examples from Later History*

One may open the pages of history at almost any point and find examples of the theme we are considering. Some of them are of the number who struggled and failed, and some had the happier fortune of struggle and success. But it was neither the success nor the failure that made them worthy of study, but the fact that they fought their difficulties and thereby came to a measure of self-mastery, discipline of mind, and control of their environment.

The long line of the missionaries furnishes a host of examples, all the way from Augustine, Boniface, and Patrick down to Carey, Moffett, Judson, Martyn, Livingstone, and Paton. Some of them succeeded in the tasks they undertook. Some of them found their labors beyond their strength. But all of them, in the measure of their consecration and effort, have left to the church a heritage of sacrifice and struggle which is more than any success they could have attained, and furnishes the foundation on which others have built their achievements. If possible, read the lives of some of these men.

The struggles of Robert Bruce and William Wallace in behalf of their beloved land of Scotland and for the deliverance of their people from oppression furnish one of the romantic chapters in British tradition.

Similar, though less successful and more tragic, was the rôle played by Joan of Arc, who roused her king and her people to seek deliverance for France, and for a brilliant moment succeeded, only to see her victories turned into defeat and her conquests lost. But that apparent failure has never tarnished the splendor of her attempt. It was the struggle that counted, and through all the later annals of France the name of the Maid of Orleans has been sacred and beloved as that of a warrior and martyr.

The story of Columbus is the narrative of one who struggled for years to bring a great dream to reality, and died at last unaware of the nature

and extent of the prize he had won. It was his faith in an idea too grand to be shared by his more timid associates that kept him loyal to his quest, and brought him the immortality of fame which all the world accords him.

And Abraham Lincoln, the man whom most people misunderstood and many despised, came through the struggles of years to be the pillar of a nation's hope, the center of a world's desire. He died the most weary and desolate man of his generation. On the morrow all mankind was voicing his praise.

Any student of history can add to this list innumerable names that occur to memory, and are worthy to be placed in the number of those who have been the benefactors of their race, through struggles with difficulties which in some instances they overcame, and in others they found too hard to be conquered. But in all cases the endeavor made them the gift-bringers to mankind. The list includes artists, poets, inventors, statesmen, warriors, educators, preachers, and others, men and women whose lives and deeds have enriched the world.

IV. *Examples from Fiction*

Every generation has exercised its imagination and satisfied its love of the romantic by contriving stories of adventure and heroism. In most instances these narratives concerned characters who had passed through great dangers and hardships to win some coveted prize. The Greeks and Romans loved to tell of the wanderings and struggles of the Argonauts, who sailed with Jason to the far regions of the Caucasus to find and recover the Golden Fleece; of Ulysses, the hero of the Trojan War, who spent long years in perils by land and sea before he could find his way back to Ithaca, and the wife and son he had left behind; of Aeneas, who after similar adventures and distresses came at last to Italy and founded the colony from which sprang the Eternal City.

Mythology, which is the normal possession of every civilization, from the Babylonians and Hebrews to the North American Indians, tells innumerable tales of struggles with giants or monsters, of which the legends regarding the twelve labors imposed by the gods on Hercules are a fair example. The element of struggle was needed to make the story complete, whether it led to success or failure. Naturally, in the major number of instances the dramatic instinct demanded the success of the hero.

The Arthurian legends told of the strikingly contrasted Knights of the Round Table, Lancelot of the Lake, and Sir Galahad. Each undertook the quest of the Holy Grail. Galahad, the spotless youth, won the prize after long search and hardship. Lancelot was helpless to attain the

reward, for his life was marred by a sin which ruined his friendship with the king and brought disaster on the realm.

> His honor rooted in dishonor stood,
> And faith, unfaithful, kept him falsely true.

Bunyan's immortal Pilgrim is one of the imperishable characters in sacred fiction. So true is that story to human nature in its search for the larger life that after a period of neglect, like the present, in which the tale fits in but illy with our opulent and pleasure-loving generation, a time of religious awakening or an age of depression and suffering sends a multitude of readers back to that classic of the Christian life. Probably no book outside of the Bible has furnished so many striking illustrations of religious experience to the pulpit and to Christian literature as *Pilgrim's Progress*. And the heart of that story is the struggle of Christian, the hero, to make his way from his home in the City of Destruction to his goal, the Celestial City. One ought to read that story once in five years at least, to revive in his mind the innumerable incidents pertinent to religious experience, and to renew his courage for the daily struggle with life.

With some reluctance one passes over a long list of characters in fiction that illustrate this study, such as Jeanie Deans, the Scotch girl in Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*, who made such a heroic and at last successful effort to save the life of her unfortunate sister, Effie; or that of Gabriel Lejeuness, the lover of Longfellow's *Evangeline*, who spent his life in an all but fruitless search for his lost sweetheart.

One figure there is in fiction which comes to mind almost instantly when the theme is that of struggle issuing at last in success after many failures and uncounted hardships. It is that of the hero of perhaps the greatest novel ever written, *Jean Valjean* in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. The familiar story requires no retelling. But the impression it leaves is unforgettable. Condemned to a criminal's fate for a crime so trivial and nearly justifiable that the sympathy of the reader is carried on resistlessly through chapter after chapter of effort, failure, struggle, partial success, then terrible tragedy again, finally, after pitiless and constant pursuit and peril, the hero comes out upon the shining levels of calm and peace. This character has brought home to multitudes of readers in many lands the grandeur of an unceasing and strenuous struggle to retrieve an unhappy past and build solidly the structure of honor and kindness. Nobler even than the final success is the resolute determination to win through to self-respect and an unblemished character. Better than any creed or ritual are these essentials of manhood.

> A noble life, a simple faith, a willing heart and hand;
> These are the lovely litanies all men can understand.

V. *Experiments in the Religious Experience of Struggle*

1. *The Practical Problem of Struggle*

The preceding part of this study has demonstrated the importance of struggle. The greater goods of life have rarely been attained save in those circumstances where men have been forced to struggle. The greatest goods and the ever higher levels of good can be attained only when men continue to struggle after they are no longer forced to it by danger and deprivation.

Here we have the great practical problem which is becoming ever more urgent and vital as our civilization makes life more easeful and luxurious. The problem is twofold: (1) How can men be induced to struggle for ever greater goods when necessity no longer compels them; (2) how can they keep on when discouraged, weary, or depressed with sense of failure. The first of these two parts of the problem is not so widely recognized as the second, but we believe it is much more serious. The old sad story of civilizations reaching a certain height of excellence and then sinking back into decadence; the old story of fathers struggling up from low levels of life only to see their sons become flabby and weak, if not vicious and dissipated; of individuals achieving a noble success, but at the age of forty or fifty beginning to decay morally, mentally, physically—this old story will continue as long as we fail to keep up the great struggle of life after the scourge of necessity no longer whips us into the fight. This applies especially to the most highly endowed. These gifted men can often get what they want without one-tenth the effort others expend. So they live their lives without making that great contribution to human welfare which they could make if they exerted themselves, and all human life is impoverished thereby.

Here, then, is the twofold vital problem involved in struggle: How can we keep it up when comfortable or when discouraged?

Let us first state how it cannot be accomplished. It cannot be accomplished merely by making up our minds to do it. Resolution is not enough. Resolution may produce spurts of effort, but it can never keep us striving with that persistency and dauntless drive which is the only road to the highest goods. The futility of all such moral volition arises out of the fact that persistent and potent struggle depends upon the release of personal energy; and personal energy can be released only when the individual is rightly stimulated. Only those situations that arouse intense desire or fear or anger or other such deep-seated emotion can release within us that amount of energy which is required for great struggle. In scientific terms, it is a problem of organic chemistry. Energy is locked up

in the organism. It must be unlocked before struggle, long-continued and powerful, is possible. No matter how conscientious, no matter how high-minded, idealistic, and spiritual a man may be, if the needed energy is not unlocked within him by the required stimulation, he simply does not have it in a form available for struggle.

Here is where science steps forward to show the futility of morality, culture, and education without religion when it comes to this problem of struggle. The utmost moral good will in the world cannot keep one struggling if he does not have the energy. Psychology and history of religion and the testimony of deeply religious people indicate that religion can release energy in great quantity. It is very certain that morality without religion cannot do this. One of the chief reasons why people so commonly put their trust in morality, culture, and education rather than religion is because they fail to see this basic truth about human nature. Food-getting, sex, fear, anger will release energy. But when we are at ease or when we are discouraged, how shall we get it? That is the great problem. Religion is the answer.

The purpose of the personal experiment in religion to be described later will be to discover that way of practicing religion which will release energy for struggle. But before we present that experiment we must look a little more closely into the sources of personal energy in order to make plain that personal experiment in religion is the only possible way to find how to get energy for struggle when we are at ease or discouraged.

2. *The Sources of Personal Energy*

The amount of personal energy available for struggle depends upon two conditions, one physiological, the other psychological. The physiological condition is stimulation of visceral processes, pre-eminently the endocrine glands. The psychological condition is freedom from mental conflict, in other words, peace. Let us briefly examine each of these in order.

When the endocrine glands are stimulated and the visceral adjustments are made through which maximum energy is released, the whole process produces a mental state called emotion. Fear, anger, and the emotional phases of desire, aspiration, hope, joy, exultation, excitement generally, are examples. But the important thing, be it remembered, is not the conscious state called emotion; the important thing is the visceral readjustments, glandular processes, and consequent release of energy. The conscious state, the emotion, simply serves to inform us that the energy is now released and made available for struggle. When this energy is drained off immediately and completely in some struggle that is

going on, one does not experience the emotion to any marked degree, even though energy is being released in great quantities.

Men vary greatly with respect to the amount of personal energy at their disposal. Some are so constituted organically that they constantly have more energy than others. This organic constitution cannot, so far as we know, be changed by training or stimulation. But given this organic constitution, a man may be subjected to such stimulation as to release far more energy than he otherwise would. Religious stimulation can do this, perhaps, more powerfully than any other. It cannot change the organic constitution, but it can stimulate that constitution so that it will yield all the energy of which it is capable.

Let us turn now to the second source of energy, the psychological. It is not so much a source as a determining condition. It is mental harmony; it is dynamic peace. It is that plastic organization of responses such that each impulse supports the others and none frustrates the others. If there is conflict in our minds between two or more opposed desires, one or both of which may be subconscious, our energies will be consumed in this conflict and hence rendered unavailable for struggle with things outside ourselves. If all our energy is consumed in struggle between our own impulses we have none left for struggle with environmental difficulties. Hence our wishes and desires must be harmonious with one another if we are to have sufficient energy for the greater struggles. This inner conflict appears in consciousness in the form of worry, fret, anxiety, melancholy, excitement, and, in extreme forms, delusion and insanity. One may suffer from this mental conflict and not know what is wrong with him. The conflict may be subconscious in part or whole.

We can now see the nature of the problem which we have to solve by personal experiment. We must find some way (1) to stimulate those glandular and other processes through which energy is released, and (2) bring peace of mind by removing those mental conflicts which waste and divert our vital energies.

3. *Personal Experiment in Religion for Release of Energy*

Let us call to mind that the aspect of the universe called God is a pervasive aspect constantly and intimately operative in our lives and in the world round about us. In so far as we yield ourselves to it, indescribable possibilities for good hover over us and loom before us. But in so far as we yield ourselves to the destructive aspects of the universe great evils hang over us and open before us. At regular seasons of worship let us cultivate this sense of divine presence, with the attendant possibilities for good and evil.

But we must not stop with this sense of divine presence and vivid apprehension of the attendant possibilities. Each of us must recognize, and through regular seasons of meditation clarify, the definite part which he is fitted to play in bringing the divine aspect of the universe into dominance, with all the consequent good, and in reducing the evil aspects with their consequent disasters. Each of us, by reason of unique individuality and circumstance, has a definite part in this vast process. This part should be formulated by us as clearly as possible. It should be put into words and repeated in seasons of meditative worship, changing the wording as our vocation grows clearer with the passage of time. Thus a life-purpose will grow upon us. Within this life-purpose specific objectives should be verbally defined in so far as we are able. This should be continued at regular seasons of worship until we attain a sense of destiny and become possessed of a passion. With some this sense of destiny and drive of passion will be much stronger than with others. But I believe everyone can achieve a driving purpose in life by practicing regularly and for a sufficient length of time the method described. A certain season set apart each Sabbath day might be used in this way. Occasional vacations could be spent in like manner. We can imagine no better way of spending a vacation than in such meditation and worship.

What we have described must be carefully distinguished from mere resolution or moral determination. The method before us consists in exposing one's self to the stimulus of certain facts until they have worked in us the physiological and psychological readjustments through which personal energy is released. It is not resolution; it is remaking of the personality through exposure to the stimulation of supremely significant facts. The consequent state of body and mind can become a permanent disposition by regular re-exposure. This exposure is a kind of worship.

There are other problems involved in struggle besides finding the required energy. There is the problem of directing the energy to worthy ends. One may struggle to do trivial or evil things. There is the problem of efficiency. One may expend his energy in waste motion. There is the problem of keeping gracious, sympathetic, and appreciative toward persons and undertakings outside one's own work. He who struggles is often harsh and even cruel in his zeal. We have not discussed these three problems, but we believe they are automatically solved in the practice of religion which we have proposed. The same experiment in religion which releases energy will guard against these dangers also.

The practice we have described should give rise to a growing passion. It is the passion that results from finding one's destiny and surrendering to the clutch of it. Passion means maximum release of energy. Historical

records indicate that no matter how frail in body one may be, such passion and sense of destiny releases energy. One may turn to flame and burn up, but as long as he lasts he has the energy needed for struggle which cannot be choked by ease nor quenched by discouragement.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Illustrate the relation of struggle to life in the biological realm.
2. Illustrate the relation of the development of skill to struggle.
3. Illustrate the relation of struggle to man's ability to control and to use social and economic forces.
4. How can struggle lead to peace in the individual experience?
5. Tell enough of the story of Jeremiah to show that he illustrates the problem of struggle and apparent failure.
6. Tell enough of the story of Isaiah to show that he furnishes an example of struggle and apparent success.
7. Name biblical characters in whose lives there has been mingled struggle and success.
8. If a man can win success through struggle at one time, why not at another?
9. What is it that puts the final estimate upon life as success or failure?
10. Give your interpretation of the statement that the story of Jesus has been made by traditional Christianity "more of a pageant than an experience."
11. Give examples from secular history of struggle and reasons for apparent failure.
12. Name a historic example of struggle and success in the lifetime of the person making the struggle.
13. In your own reading of fiction, what character gives the best illustration of struggle and success, or struggle and failure?
14. State the twofold vital problem involved in struggle.
15. How does science help us to see the futility of morality without religion?
16. What are the necessary psychological conditions for the increase of energy?
17. Give some suggestions for achieving a driving purpose in life.
18. How can one be saved from struggle in trivial or wrong directions?
19. Can you give from your own life or that of some one whom you have observed illustrations of the principle of the release of spiritual energy by deliberate effort?
20. Are you attempting any of the experiments proposed in the studies so far?

Study V[1]

Religious Experience through Loyalty to a Great Cause

NOTE.—The student will at once see that the interest of the present study will be greatly increased through a fresh reading of numerous biographies such as *Life of Pasteur* by R. Vallery-Rabot, *Life of David Livingstone* by Henry M. Stanley, *Life of William Carey* by Frank D. Walker, *Life of St. Francis* by Gilbert K. Chesterton, *Life of Abraham Lincoln* by Carl Sandburg, *Life of Michael Angelo* by Romaine Rolland, *Life of Phillips Brooks* by Alexander B. G. Allen, *Joan of Arc* by F. C. Lowell, *Twenty Years at Hull House* by Jane Addams, *All in a Lifetime* by Henry Morgenthal, *From Immigrant to Inventor* by Michael Pupin, *The Making of an American* by Jacob Riis, and *Theodore Roosevelt, the Citizen* by Jacob Riis.

I. *Introduction*

The Christian life is devotion to a cause. Everything else may be regarded as subservient to this. The final test of a man's faith, of his labor, of his consecration is found in the fruitfulness of his life in the great cause. This cause is an active, unselfish, intelligent social enterprise for the betterment of human life through the extension of the Kingdom of Heaven. There are many kinds of talents required in it and there is scope for every degree of proficiency in its service. All of man's resources of brains, of wealth, of prestige, of practical experience, of friendship, of aesthetic refinement are called into play by it. Since the cause of religion is inclusive and comprehensive, it takes up all other good movements into itself and gives them enhancement and fuller development. Secular interests are all partial and incomplete. None is sufficient unto itself. For its own fulfilment it needs aid from outside itself, but the religious life is just the comprehensive and well-rounded whole. The school may equip an individual with knowledge, but no one would wish to go to school all his life or to be limited to what the school has to give. Business is a process of exchange of goods for profit, but the game of commercial enterprise is disappointing unless its gains find outlet in some social or idealistic undertaking. The home is the center and refuge of

[1] Professor Edward S. Ames and Professor Henry N. Wieman have co-operated in the preparation of this study (see Table of Contents).

the intimate relations of a small group, but it requires contacts with other interests to make it satisfying. Unless the members of a family have outlets through the community, through work, and through friendships, they grow narrow and selfish. Religion seeks to recognize the relation of every interest to all the other interests; it is a kingdom of kingdoms; a system of worlds within the total order of life. The cause of religion therefore requires diligence in business, fidelity in love, beauty in holiness, reverence toward the state, and wisdom in all things.

II. *Finding a Cause*

The Hebrew religion is an example of such a comprehensive cause. The Jew understood that his religion required of him faithfulness in all things: in labor, in trade, in care of health, in domestic life, in war, and in worship. It was for the opportunity to cultivate all of these varied interests that the Hebrews struggled adventurously into strange lands, sought release from bondage in Egypt, and pushed their way into the rich lands "flowing with milk and honey." Gradually the wanderings and emergencies of their unsettled life came to be interpreted by their leaders as training and preparation for a more established and peaceful existence. They would enter the promised land if they were worthy of it. If they kept the commandments and observed all the requirements of the Law their God would richly reward them. It therefore became incumbent on those who perceived the relation between righteousness and blessedness to proclaim it, to exhort others to have regard for it, and to punish offenders against it. The cause of Israel was thus the urge toward self-preservation, the enlargement of the nation, and the subjection of threatening enemies. At last every great cause is that of the unfolding of the life of a group, the perfecting and extension of the welfare and power of the soul of a people, and within this common ideal are many contributory interests which at times take on the importance of the main cause.

As their history developed the leaders defined their goals more and more in terms of the ends which their ancestors had endeavored to reach. The promises which Abraham cherished—that his seed should be as numerous as the sands of the seashore and as the stars of heaven—sustained the hopes of later ages when the tragedies of war and the oppressions of slavery seemed to threaten their very life. It was this loyalty to his people that roused the wrath of Moses when he saw his kinsman smitten by the Egyptian; it was his brooding over their wrongs which made him responsive to the voice out of the burning bush and led him to go before Pharaoh in the name of his God to seek their deliverance. He found his

great cause through sympathy and pity for his oppressed fellows and in devotion to the growing dream of their release he became their leader and emancipator. He was hesitant and fearful, but their cries of pain and sorrow impelled his will and stirred his mind to find ways for their escape. Step by step he made his way into the confidence and courage and trust in God which made him their leader and deliverer.

> Prompt sense of equity! to thee belongs
> The swift redress of unexamined wrongs!
> Eager to serve, the cause perhaps untried,
> But always apt to choose the suffering side!

How often the moral heroes of the race have found their awakening to great religious enterprises through the natural sympathy of their souls in response to the sufferings and injustices which burdened the lives of their fellows. The divine "call" has come to sensitive souls in all ages through the wrongs which their people bore. Jesus saw the people of his land scattered like sheep without a shepherd. He saw them in multitudes like fields white unto harvest. They were led by blind leaders of the blind; they were borne down by exactions of scribes and Pharisees; they were lost in the mazes of old customs and ancient legal minutiae. His soul recoiled from the formalism and traditions which bound them to fear, and slavery of external rites. After long meditation and brooding prayer he entered upon his ministry of love and faith in love. He proclaimed the Sabbath a free day, made for man; he made the intent of the heart mightier than works of the law; he saw forgiveness as the gift of divine grace; and set humility and meekness above correctness and outward power. The conventional theologians of his time were shocked to hear him say that love to God and love to man is the fulfilling of the law.

The apostle Paul found his cause through response to the needs of his fellow-men. It was the suffering of the martyr Stephen which roused Paul to the new Way. The face of the victim of Jewish fanaticism and persecution was calm and full of light as he fell under the cruel stones. Paul could not forget that face. Its innocence and serenity haunted him as he went on the road to Damascus to persecute other Christians, until it awakened a doubt as to his own course. Then it began to be clear to him that there must be something noble about a faith which could command such devotion. Gradually he became aware that the face of the dying man was framed in a larger radiance, the radiance of a heavenly vision, blinding and overwhelming in its convincing intensity. Then he heard the voice of his Master and surrendered to him with complete

devotion. From that day he never wavered, but with restless zeal carried the good news of the Christian Way throughout the gentile world. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him," he wrote to Timothy late in life, after he had suffered many things for his faith.

III. *A Great Cause Liberates the Soul*

When a really great cause is found and a man's whole soul is enlisted in it, it liberates him and carries him into a larger world. There is a false notion among some selfish people that participation in a social enterprise restricts and narrows life. They say that a uniform limits a man to a select group, that the buttons and badges and insignia of an order bind us in. But they may also be the signs of release. Does the soldier in regalia feel himself shut in, or does he feel himself supported by all the power and resource of his country? The member of a labor union often finds a new ground of self-respect and confidence in association with the thousands of other men bound together for mutual aid. The fraternal orders which abound in such numbers and which command such loyalty answer to some deep need of co-operation on the part of individuals who seek participation in a larger life. When they gather in assemblies or march in parades they share the pride of strength which comes only from alliance with others in a common enterprise. Each one is sensible of multiplying his own little power by the number of his brothers bound by the same oaths.

With what warmth the heart of a lone traveler, far from home, glows when he discovers on the lapel of another man the same emblem which he himself has learned to cherish. At once they are on common ground. They share secrets together and know that they are bound together by ties which hold them in a kinship of understanding and service when needed. At a glance and a handclasp the loneliness and strangeness disappear. Here is a brother. Memories awaken, and the tides of an old, deep fellowship stir into life with the sweetness and comfort which only ideal fellowships can waken. Each, somewhere in the past, has given himself to the dream of an outreaching friendship which circles many hearts and is a guaranty against neglect and desolating isolation.

But probably no single sign of comradeship has carried such quickening magic to hungry, troubled souls as the little gold cross or the black ebony cross of religious orders. In the throng and press of busy life they set the soul singing with the songs of hope. With never a word spoken there is consciousness of the possibility of help and friendship wherever that sign appears. What a marvelous tribute it is to the power of the

spiritual life that this token of suffering and death should have been transformed into the symbol of love and consolation! Strangers are apt to seem alien and remote, perhaps dangerous and threatening, but this emblem of Christ, worn by any man or woman in the wide world, disarms suspicion and invites friendliness and confidence. Perhaps if all Christians wore it there would be a sudden increment of good will and cheerfulness throughout the world.

Not only does the badge of the religion of Jesus give assurance to those who see it, but it has its effect upon him who bears it. Just as a soldier's uniform tends to support his sense of responsibility, so the cross restrains and softens the heart of him who carries it. Every man needs to be reminded at times of the cause to which he has committed himself, of the vows he has taken, of the ideal company of which he is a member. The more he can keep himself aware of it the better the chance of his fulfilling his resolutions to support and exemplify it. Even Paul needed to remind himself sometimes that he bore in his body the marks of his Master, whatever they were. They were signs, not only to others, but to himself. It was as if he were branded with the name of Christ as a bond slave to his lord, and of that bondage Paul was proud and knew that it was also the evidence of his complete freedom.

Missionaries are excellent illustrations of the liberating and enriching effect of identification with the great cause of Christianity. Hundreds of boys and girls have gone out from provincial homes and village churches under the missionary impulse. That impulse took them first to a school and enlarged their minds and their human contacts. Then it carried them to a foreign land, taught them a new language, and opened in China or Japan or India an ancient civilization and an extensive literature; faced them with art and manners built up through generations of human association; mellowed them with travel and with wide social contacts. That missionary impulse lifted them into the attention of their fellow-Christians at home and gave them a hearing when they returned on furlough which they might never have been able to achieve in the routine of life at home. And above all it put into their hearts and on their lips a thrilling story of spiritual adventure which renews in a prosaic world the appeal of the unselfish and fruitful enterprise of the story of Christ's love moving in the dark places of the world. They have become the representatives, not only of the transforming power of religion in individuals, but they tell of schools and orphanages, of hospitals and homes, of far-reaching social movements, and of international relations. The cause they have worked in has deepened their own lives and given new extensions to the spiritual boundaries of mankind.

What the poet, Thomas Curtis Clark, has said of Abraham Lincoln's sense of his mission has been illustrated in the experience of many men whose lives were magnified and multiplied by serving in the enterprises of the church:

God took a piece of common human clay;
Planted therein ambition's vital seed;
Placed him, a youth, beside the common way,
That he might learn the common human need.
Made strong by strife, he faced the storm of wrath;
Love made him wise, a Nation's cause to plead;
He walked with God, though in a yeoman's path,
And seized on fame by an immortal deed.

IV. *The Discipline of a Cause*

The discipline of a cause is one of the surest ways of achieving a strong and healthy moral character. Paul is eloquent about what it did for him. He says: "Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

This reference to sports reminds us of the extent to which modern athletics have become the means of discipline among American youth. Those college men who go in for athletics are subjected to an abstemious régime which is all too uncommon among other students. Their hours of sleep and work, their food and drink, in fact all items in their whole round of life are controlled in the interest of success in sports. They have not merely the stimulus of winning games, but of representing their fellow-students and maintaining the honor and prestige of their school. The publicity given to athletics by the modern press adds a keen stimulus, for the force of public opinion is one of the most determining influences in life. It is impressive to the last degree to see with what devotion and unselfish interest the members of college teams throw themselves into this cause. They have no inhibitions in the display of emotions over their games. They bear wounds and broken limbs with stoic resignation. Their "pep meetings" are as unrestrained as an old-fashioned camp-meeting, and their demonstrations over victories are like the triumphal celebrations of armies. All this stimulates ambitious athletes to hard work and gives promise of plaudits and acclaim which are so dear to the heart of a boy. It is encouraging to believe that in the

colleges there are other youths cherishing the examples of great scientists and scholars and learning from them the mastery of knowledge and work which will bring them success and the character molded by successful labor.

But the disciplines which arise from a cause are not merely those of restraint. They are often those of adventure and courageous initiative. Jesus sent his disciples out into the world knowing that they would encounter problems and opportunities which had not arisen in his time and land. The developments of his church have often been the result of social pressure. Such may have been the occasion of the great ecclesiastical systems which seemed so necessary to perpetuate the teaching of the Christian religion. But in the modern world a new sense of the advantage of experimentation has arisen, and men are impelled carefully to try out many plans of interpretation and of practice of the religion of Jesus. Already most churches have given up their adherence to fixed creeds. Seldom is one called upon to sign such statements. They are beginning to trust the intentions of men and to proceed as if human nature were not totally evil, but capable of responding to the good and lovely things when they are made clear.

In all this experimenting there is one cause which is uppermost: the cause of human welfare and development. For that everything else is made subordinate and instrumental. We are no longer so certain that all the old customs and habits of religious institutions are advantageous for this main purpose. In the very effort of the churches to serve they are being modified and reconstructed in surprising ways. Not only have they softened their doctrines, but they have begun to add the influences of the arts, architecture and music and drama, and the graces of social intercourse. They have reconsidered the problem of teaching childhood and youth. Instead of just presenting material to be learned by rote, they are seeking to understand the interests and the capacities of the child. Rather than endeavoring to shape the character of the individual into a preconceived pattern, they are seeking to cultivate richer and finer types of persons more adequately equipped to live the religious life. Under the impulsion of a creative and inventive spirit the churches are beginning to profit by the reaction of this method upon themselves and are becoming conscious of their freedom and of the zest of adventurous religion. Business takes on new forms; industry develops on a new scale and with different forms of organization and administration; home life is managed in ways which would have astonished a past generation; the schools are full of devices and methods and attitudes which have lately come into education. It could hardly be expected that religious institu-

tions could be kept aloof from all such movements of experimenting intelligence. Religion itself is influenced by these changes and tends to take on a freer and more adaptable character in the interest of the fulfilment of religious needs.

V. *Rewards of Loyalty to a Great Cause*

The rewards and satisfactions of service in an ideal cause are among the finest the world affords. A man who is engaged in a great movement like that of the religion of Jesus feels himself a part of an enterprise which far outruns his own lifetime. He was born into it, and a long history has already run its course. Far beyond his own time the cause will continue on its way, but it will bear through all its future some impress of all those who have helped to fashion and further it. Thus one may

> Join the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence; live
> In pulses stirred to generosity,
> In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
> For miserable aims that end with self,
> In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
> And with their mild persistence urge men's search
> To vaster issues. So to live is heaven:
> To make undying music in the world,
> Breathing a beauteous order that controls
> With growing sway the growing life of man.

It is an inspiring thought that men like Dr. Wilfred Grenfell, who have gone into some lonely, forbidding corner of the earth, impelled by the love of men and devotion to the cause of Christ, have been able in a lifetime to see the fruits of their labor and to receive the gratitude of those whom they have served so unselfishly. Dr. Grenfell went as a young medical student to a meeting conducted by Dwight L. Moody in East London and was impelled to undertake mission work among the deep-sea fishermen. When the hardest of that work was done he turned to other fields and "found what he sought in the work among the fishermen of the Labrador coast, a wild, barren stretch of cold, gray rock, washed by the stormy waves and worn smooth by the ice. Here he found men the requirements of whose calling made it necessary that everyone should be of heroic stamp. They had to navigate waters that were treacherous in the extreme. They were beset by the danger of sudden storms, of hidden rocks and shoals, for the most part uncharted; of drifting icebergs that no man could ever locate, of fogs that came with

the suddenness of a summer squall. They were at the mercy of unscrupulous traders. Moreover, these people, in their isolation, were beyond the reach of medical help in times of illness. To these men Grenfell came like some good angel. When he first appeared in his little craft they thought him mad. He would brave dangers that even these fishermen shrank from, though such things were of daily occurrence with them. It was said that no storm, or fog, or dangers of reef or iceberg, or all of them together could keep Grenfell in harbor when a call for help came from beyond. . . . . He has established four hospitals, at different points along the coast, each with its corps of trained nurses and doctors. To these he brings the sick in his hospital ship during the summer and by dog train in the winter. He has established co-operative stores to free the men from the domination of the trader, making it possible for them to buy their supplies and sell their fish at fair price."

Dr. Grenfell has lived to see the results of his arduous labors. He has lived to hear the commendations of the whole Christian world, and to know that he has impressed many a man with the determination to do more adventurous work in the cause of religion. Surely his reward is already great.

VI. *Devotion to a Cause Feeds the Mind*

This devotion to a cause furnishes the mind and imagination with material for fruitful and elevating meditation. What we reflect upon in moments of solitary reflection are the experiences which occupy us in our times of stressful action. We are always in the midst of unfinished tasks, and we are constantly running out lines of imagination into the future, planning further deeds and contemplating their far consequences. The great religious souls are those who feel most keenly and profoundly the magnitude and importance of the events with which they are involved. These are world-events, occurrences upon which the destiny of individuals and society turns. In them man faces the nature of the whole world and the ways of God. The highest and the most devastating emotions are bound up with them. It was in their escape from Egypt that the Israelites experienced the great opening for their future, and the Passover celebrates to this day the intense emotion which they felt in that crucial hour of their history. Not only does it have for them the reminiscent value of a great deliverance, but it is also the promise of a continuing providence which shall be adequate to their present and their future distress. All great religious emotion turns upon similar conflicts between the strain of direful situations and the possible conquest of them.

In the Christian's view of life there is the same kind of conflict. He

lives in a precarious world, and the future is given him only in imagination. He does not know what a day may bring forth. It is the test of his faith to believe that the way of righteousness and fidelity to the best of his past experience will bring him safely through. God has been revealed to him in the measure of success and care which has blessed his life. It has not been easy or smooth, but there has been much good and much ground for gratitude. Life thus teaches confidence and at the same time instils caution and active effort. Men reap as they sow, at least in such degree that most men continue to work by that conviction. Therefore they look toward the future, expecting from it the continuance of that law and the enlargement of their achievements if they are faithful to the ways of God as they have learned them. One of the great characteristics, therefore, of Christian services of meditation is this expectancy. When conditions in human society were so forbidding to the humble, powerless believers, they let their hopes outrun this present world and looked to a bright heaven beyond the grave. They could not see any reasonable ground of hope that this world would give them a fair and just reward, but they did not limit their God to this vale of time. Nor did they falter in their assurance that the principles of his spiritual kingdom would eventually prevail. They continued to rejoice in the inner life they cherished, although outwardly they were persecuted and disdained.

Stevenson, in his tale of "The Lantern-Bearers," points out that "the ground of a man's joy is hard to hit upon," at least for the mere observer. In that story he tells how the boys would gather at dusk and enter the hull of an old fishing smack. When they had gathered in the little cabin each boy would unbutton his coat and take from his belt a bull's-eye lantern. Then in the flickering light they would tell tales of the sea, of pirates, and treasure ships, and the old days of wonderful adventure. To an outsider it would appear to be dismal business, in such surroundings and with so little substance of reality in their immediate experience to justify their intense interest and joy. Doubtless the meetings of Christians in all ages have seemed as strange to many who looked upon them. But in the hearts of these Christians a great story lived and and a great dream was stirring. They believed themselves in possession of the deep mysteries of life. They could read for themselves in their sacred books the true history of the secular world around them. Its sham and hollowness, its pain and illusion, its brutality and transiency were revealed, while the things they cherished, love, kindliness, humility, and faith in spiritual forces were more powerful in God's sight than all the devices of worldly potentates.

A man said unto his Angel:
"My spirits are fallen low,
And I cannot carry this battle;
O, brother, where might I go?

The terrible kings are on me
With spears that are deadly bright;
Against me so from the cradle
Do fate and my fathers fight."

Then said to the man his Angel:
"Thou wavering, witless soul,
Back to the ranks! What matter
To win or to lose the whole,

As judged by the little judges
Who hearken not well nor see?
Not thus, by the outer issue,
The Wise shall interpret thee.

Thy will is the sovereign measure
And only event of things;
The puniest heart, defying,
Were stronger than all these kings."

VII. *The Supreme Cause*

The cause of religion as we have viewed it is the greatest spiritual enterprise of the human race, gathering into itself all other constructive interests and interpreting the whole of life. It is therefore a task and a contemplative experience. It is the task of taking our human existence where we find it, with all its evils and shortcomings, and recognizing also the presence of strivings and idealizing tendencies which give promise of better things. Certainly human life is not static. It is constantly changing, and now more than ever before. The religious man, in the Western world and in the Christian churches at any rate, has always before him the challenge to improvement for himself and for society. He is taught to hope and to work for a better order and to realize that contentment with things as they are is sinful. The motivation to this activity is in the suffering and discontent which present conditions bring, and the sympathy men feel for their fellows who suffer wrongs.

The other side of religion is in contemplation of the long processes of history in which the devout soul sees the hand of God shaping the destiny of the race. This contemplation may be quite objective, as if the individual had no part in it except a passive acceptance of what

occurs; or it may include the course of events as modified by human will. Men differ greatly as to the emphasis they attach to one or the other of these attitudes, but in a formative, growing society like ours in America the general temper is to think of religion as constructive and creative. For those who see it in this way, contemplation has a more intimate and human side. Men feel themselves "working together with God." They believe that they are real agents in the great process, and that the movements of the divine will which they behold are also in some measure the expressions of their own wills in harmony with the divine. In such a view there is the rapport of the mystic's thought:

> I come in the little things,
> Saith the Lord:
> My starry wings
> I do forsake,
> Love's highway of humility to take:
> Meekly I fit my stature to your need.
> In beggar's part
> About your gates I shall not cease to plead—
> As man, to speak with man—
> Till by such art
> I shall achieve My Immemorial Plan,
> Pass the low lintel of the human heart.

In this conception every vital concern of human life may become a religious occupation—business, professional work in medicine or law or teaching, affairs of family and of state, science and art, and the common ways of friendship—for all of these may contribute to the enlargement and refinement of individual and associated life. Religious experience has no separate and unique sphere of its own. Rather it lies at the very heart of all high and worthy endeavor. Whoever discovers this lives in the surge and thrill of the larger life which flows in and around him. He is lifted above the passing moment and reaches out into the infinite.

> Enough, if something from our hands have power
> To live and act and serve the future hour;
> And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
> Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
> We feel that we are greater than we know.

VIII. *Experiment in Loyalty to a Cause*

1. *The Problem*

In this section of our study we always try to propose a religious method for solving some important practical problem for human living which is involved in the theme under discussion. To that end our first task is to locate and state the practical problem, then to formulate the proposition and the experimental method by which it may be solved.

The great cause has been presented in the preceding part of this study. We have felt the urgency and the inspiration of it. It is the all-inclusive enterprise of enlarging and refining the life of man, an enterprise in which we each may have a share. When we consider this cause, and how to make personal connection with it, we are immediately confronted with a practical problem.

Can I be sure that the specific thing which I find to do is wholly and significantly of service to this cause? Can I be sure that I am doing, or can do, anything for the cause which is sufficiently worth while to command my full devotion? The cause is all right, but my part in it—that is the problem. Can I be sure that I, even with the best intentions and utmost effort, shall not be producing at least some results through my work that positively obstruct the cause? That such results do ensue is evident to anyone who with unbiased mind will carefully observe his own experience and study the historic record. Every specific and definite form of human need in this evil world will, when satisfied by me in so far as I am able to satisfy it, lead to evil as well as good. There is no church or other institution with which I can work which will not involve me in evil. There is no campaign or enterprise or group of men with which I may ally myself which is not tainted and productive of evil. And many times the evil results are greater than the good. Every concrete specific undertaking which men have begun with high hope and great enthusiasm has been disappointing in the end to those who were sufficiently observant, humble, and open-minded to see the evil and futility of their efforts along with whatever good may have resulted.

Men do not necessarily think the matter out in the way we have presented it; they do not analyze their feelings; but their problem with respect to any great cause brought to their attention is often of just this sort. They do not respond with full devotion either because the cause is not sufficiently definite, concrete, and close at hand so they can make direct connection with it, or else the specific and concrete thing presented has none of that indubitable and overmastering urgency and grandeur that can command their complete loyalty. You and I and most men

would respond readily and completely and passionately if we could be sure that the concrete and immediate piece of work accessible to us was altogether pure and glorious, and that our devotion to it would really count for something of importance in service of the great cause. But as soon as a cause becomes embodied in concrete form in this evil and complicated world it ceases to be pure. It cannot command our hearts, and it should not. The evil is so intricately involved in the good, the tares so mixed with the wheat, and there is so much uncertainty concerning just what is the wheat and what the tares, that we cannot make direct connection with the great cause.

Here, then, is our practical problem: How to find the great cause in such form that we can yield our lives to it.

One way to solve this problem is that of the fanatic. He blinds himself to the evil and tawdry features involved in the enterprise to which he gives his allegiance. He has found a "great cause," to be sure. He may call it Christ or socialism, Kingdom of Heaven or vegetarian diet, saving souls or pacifism. The slogan he uses makes little difference. The point is that he is able to esteem his cause so great, and can give it his unreserved devotion, only because he will not admit what others less prejudiced can plainly see. He will not admit that the cause as served by him is mixed with all manner of worthless and evil things, and in the end may result in as much harm as good. He makes himself think he is engaged in something wonderful when he is not. Such fanaticism is not the transfiguring loyalty which we need and crave. It is not the loyalty which the preceding part of this paper has presented. Yet we can see all about us and read in the historic records that no matter how devoted men may have been, and no matter how sure of serving a great cause, they have always wrought evil as well as good, and often the results of their efforts, when closely examined, can be seen to have been quite futile.

Where and how shall we find our cause, we who refuse to deceive ourselves and follow the fanatic? How can we catch the transfiguring devotion without surrendering to fanaticism?

2. *The Proposition*

This world has some possibility for maximum good which can be achieved through right adjustment of the different factors which enter into the making of it. What this possible maximum good may be we do not know. Eye hath not seen it nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man in the form of any dream or vision. Our thoughts concerning its nature may be mistaken. Indeed, our ideas of it in great part

must be mistaken, else we would not disagree about it so radically and violently. And our ways of serving that cause must be mistaken in great part else we would not so commonly work at cross-purposes. But despite these facts it is a self-evident truth to say that among all the possibilities for good and evil which are inherent in this universe there is one or more which is the maximum good. This genuine possibility for maximum good inherent in the universe may be called the cause of Christ, the will of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, the utmost welfare of mankind, etc., but its specific nature and the best way to promote it is something about which only the fanatic is sure; and he is probably most mistaken of all.

There is no straight-cut and definite course of action known to us which will lead directly to the actualization of this possible maximum good. It is too mysterious, too ill defined in our own minds; the processes of life are too intricately interwoven, and we are too ignorant of the outcome of any suggested course of procedure. There is, however, one course of procedure and one way of living in which we can give our whole lives in complete loyalty to that unknown good.

3. *The Method*

The intelligent method of loyalty to the supreme but unknown good consists in throwing the light of observation and experimental investigation over all the processes of life. That means first of all that we shall examine ourselves and constantly observe ourselves to see what habits, what impulses, what mental attitudes produce what consequences, and try to ascertain the value of these consequences. Secondly, it means that we shall constantly observe what customs, what mutual adaptations within our own family and between ourselves and other intimate associates, yield deeper community of heart and mind and greater co-operation. Thirdly, it means that we shall constantly observe and investigate what consequences result from what social customs, and other conditions generally in the world round about us. Of course no man can cover all these fields of investigation. But every man can take his own special line of endeavor, whatever it may be, and make it a field of constant and searching observation and experimental investigation to the end of ascertaining what results for good or ill may ensue. Also, every man can make his own personal conduct in dealing with his own intimate associates a matter of searching inquiry.

What constitutes the significance of this method? Its significance lies in this: that we rest our hope for the ultimate actualization of supreme good, not on the success of any specific practical enterprise, but upon the slowly garnered wisdom which is yielded by this method of indefatigable

observation. It means that we shall turn our very failures and worst disasters into tools for the achievement of this ultimate good, inasmuch as such failures and disasters yield the largest harvest of wisdom if we constantly keep in the clear light of consciousness, just so far as we can, all the factors which led up to the failure or disaster.

Seasons for cultivating and practicing most intensely this observation are seasons of worship. Where are we going? What have we been doing? What attitudes on our part and on the part of humankind have produced what results, and what are the values of these? Such questions ought properly to find some answer in the season of worship. For worship ought to be a mountain top whence we can survey our lives and the lives of men. We are not saying this is all there is to worship; but this is an essential part of it. Of course, however, the observation of life cannot be limited to worship. Our whole point is that it must be constantly practiced. But nothing can be constantly practiced unless we set aside certain times for its special cultivation. Worship is such a time.

Some may object to this proposed method of observation, thinking that it will destroy the great joys and enthusiasms of life. Sometimes, they say, we must abandon ourselves to some "fine careless rapture," and disregard consequences. Now it is true that constant, critical observation of self and others and life as a whole does destroy joy and enthusiasm except as this constant critical examination is made the embodiment and expression of passionate devotion to the supreme cause. And that is precisely what we are proposing.

We suggest this method of solving the problem of how to make personal connection with the great cause: (1) constant, searching, critical, and experimental observation in everything we do to promote the good; (2) measure our service to the good not merely by objective achievement but by the wisdom gained in how to do good. Thus we shall transmute our very failures, disappointments, disillusionments, and difficulties into gain. We can begin by applying this method and assuming this attitude in any minor undertaking which we have begun or are about to begin. (3) We can take certain seasons of worship for special examination of what we have done, how we have done it, and also for reaching conclusions on the grounds of these observations.

The results to look for as tests of this method are: (1) change in the kind of things we undertake; (2) change in the way we go about doing it; (3) increase in the final value of what we do; (4) transfer of our highest loyalty and deepest enthusiasm from the special task to that unknown good which we serve by slowly bringing it to light through the accumulated wisdom of history, our chief service being assimilation of, and con-

tribution to, this wisdom of life. In this way lives which fail magnificently may be great successes. Perhaps this kind of failure is the genius of Christianity and the spirit of Christ.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Define the comprehensiveness of the Christian life as a cause.
2. Name several Old Testament characters whose loyalty to a cause distinguished them.
3. Define the cause to which Jesus was committed.
4. How would you describe the cause for which Paul labored?
5. What led these men to ally themselves with these causes?
6. In what ways can the championship of a great cause be said to enlarge a man's life?
7. Illustrate the foregoing by those who devote themselves to the missionary enterprise.
8. Again illustrate by great statesmen.
9. In what way are there "disciplines" in alliance with a great cause?
10. In what sense does labor for such a cause reward a man who does not initiate the cause, as, for instance, discipleship to Jesus?
11. In case one does not see the results of one's labor, what reward is there?
12. How does such devotion "feed the mind?"
13. Suppose that one chooses religion as a great cause. How is this loyalty interwoven with all other life-interests?
14. What is the first practical problem in considering how one should choose his special field of loyalty?
15. What is the supremely great cause?
16. Suggest the three legitimate steps in devotion to any cause.
17. What relation do worship seasons have to such an enterprise?
18. How can we test the value of the method proposed in the study?
19. Can results to human character be measured by the ultimate success or failure of one's enterprises?
20. What characters of history or fiction do you suggest as illustrating this study?

Study VI[1]

Religious Experience through Happiness

I. *Introduction*

Religion is most naturally a reaching out for help. It grows out of a sense of inadequacy. "Out of the depths" men have cried unto the Lord. There can be no doubt that the profoundest religious experience has ever come out of the tragedy and difficulty of human life. The triumphs of faith have been realized by the afflicted, the bereaved, the persecuted. The great Christian symbol is the cross; the sacrament is the symbol of the broken body and the shed blood. Christianity is concerned with the redemption of a sinful world and the salvation of a suffering world. Jesus quotes the great commission as applicable to himself—the Spirit of the Lord anointing the Servant to minister to the poor, the captives, the blind, the bruised (Luke 4:16–19). A great undertone of sorrow and pain runs through our religious history.

True, Jesus speaks often of his joy; he opens his great discourse with beatitudes; and Paul includes joy among the fruits of the Spirit. The heroic souls have never asked for pity, but have rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to fill up that which was lacking of the sufferings of Christ. Martyrs have gone singing to the stake. The redeemed have rejoiced in their salvation. Our religion is a religion of joy. But it is the joy of the conquest of circumstance. It is joy in spiritual exaltation over physical pain and worldly misfortune. It is the happiness of those who are giving themselves for the good of others. Has not the church always opposed its spiritual joys to carnal pleasures? Are not the beatitudes the paradox that happiness is really the result of the deeper and holier search for what is good? "Be my joy three parts pain," says Browning, and therein expresses the faith that life is good, not for its comforts and evident satisfactions, but for its striving and its hopes.

Yet there is a religious experience that grows out of sheer happiness, the sense of well being, the pleasure of being alive in this vital world. It is not the highest religious experience. It is certainly wholly inadequate by itself. That would be a precarious religion that was dependent upon

[1] Professors Theodore G. Soares and Henry N. Wieman have co-operated in the preparation of this study (see Table of Contents).

health, friendship, and good fortune. But there are many religious moods; each of us may develop religion in many experiences. We shall be most concerned about those that are noblest, most vital, most enduring. But we need not neglect any. A little consideration will make it plain that genuine religion, not at all to be despised in its quality, does arise in this joy of living, this delight in the good world, yes, even in the sense of comfort and pleasure.

II. *Illustrations from the Bible*

1. *Prosperity and Religious Experience*

We may begin with that noble piece of literature the Book of Job, which might seem to be the denial of our thesis. The book was written to combat the prevalent theory of life that goodness was always rewarded with temporal prosperity while sin was always punished with pain and disaster. Job denies the justice of the universe because, though innocent, he is afflicted. The great religious triumph comes when he withdraws his complaint and is satisfied with the vision of God. The theory of suffering put forth by the friends is wholly discredited. But Job did gain a religious experience out of his prosperity. Read the Prologue (chapters 1 and 2) and note how genuine was Job's sense of fellowship with God when all went well with him; so genuine, indeed, that it survived the terrible disasters. Read chapter 29, where he recalls his days of happiness, when he was just and generous, rejoicing in doing good. The author is not suggesting that this was anything but a genuine religious experience. Prosperity did make Job religious, and if he had died without meeting misfortune he would have continued in his simple, happy sense that God was with him. The author is not concerned to deny religious quality to this mood. He insists that it is not an adequate interpretation of life. A religion that must depend upon prosperity will not sustain a man in the inevitable disasters that come upon us all. But we do not have to wait for disaster in order to be religious. True, the sinister aspects of life are always present, if not in our own case, certainly in that of our brother, with whom we must sympathize. The author of Job does not deal with this problem, which would only have confused the simple tragedy of the good man's misfortune. There are experiences of well being, and well being shared with others, which may give rise, as they did with Job, to happy experiences of the blessing of God. Let no man make inevitable link of well being and religion, for that is to deny the facts of life.[1] Eliphaz is so

[1] *Speeches of Eliphaz*, chaps. 4, 5, 15, 22.

far right, though his explanatory theory is wholly wrong, that "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." When the trouble comes he must be able to find his religious experience in faith, resignation, and hope.

Read II Samuel, chapter 7. The writer of this narrative thinks of David as having reached a great success in his kingship. He has overcome the dangerous border enemies and has settled himself in his palace secure and satisfied. He is profoundly grateful to Jehovah and desires to signify his gratitude by erecting a costly temple. Jehovah does not rebuke him for this purpose, only informs him that the temple shall be built by his successor. Jehovah promises David continued success and prosperity and an enduring throne for his descendants. David is deeply impressed and expresses his humility and gratitude in fitting communion.

We are not here concerned with the historical facts, nor with an interpretation of David's motives; still less with the question whether God really is responsible for all the kinds of success which this somewhat unscrupulous king had achieved. The religious man who wrote this narrative found it natural to portray religion as arising out of the experience of prosperity which he has described. And is this an unworthy suggestion? Has not patriotic success constantly led men to thank God? Shakespeare makes King Henry after Agincourt command that "*Te Deum* and *Non Nobis* be sung." To be sure it was the victory of an invader over a people fighting for their native land. We do not approve the expedition, but we cannot deny that there is a religious experience in the sense of gratitude and humility with which the prosperity is ascribed to God. There is a moral danger in the experience, which Kipling has finely expressed in *The Recessional.* Note that David's prayer has not a little of the quality of the English poem.

Read I Kings, chapter 8, for a similar experience ascribed to Solomon. This is doubtless a highly idealized narrative coming from a much later age. We are studying, not the religious experience of Solomon, but of the writer of the beautiful narrative with the speech and the prayer of the king. To him the success, the wealth, the prosperity of the great son of David and the triumphant completion of the glorious edifice for Jehovah evoked a deep sense of the grace and goodness of God. It was cause for humble gratitude.

Read Deuteronomy, chapter 8, especially verses 7–14. This is a description of the good land of Palestine for which Israel is to be thankful. Religious experience is to be the outcome of wealth. Are not such prayers offered in Christian churches every Sunday? Note that the religion is not in the enjoyment of the wealth but in the humility of spirit that remem-

bers the giver. Again it is Kipling's mood, and he got his phrase "lest we forget" from this passage.

Read Deuteronomy 28:1–14. Consider whether this appeal is warranted by the facts of life. Note that the book of Job was written to combat the theory of obedience and prosperity here laid down. But is there not a simple, at least partial, truth in this statement that national welfare does call for the religious response of gratitude? The older commentators used to insist that because nations are not immortal they must have their rewards and punishments in this life, while for individuals there is a longer range of treatment. Of course no such naïve view of Providence can help us. The question to be considered is: May a true religious experience arise out of the recognition that we live in a good land, a wealthy land, and that our national life is prosperous? Many questions of social and international justice will of course present themselves and must be considered in any full determination of the case. Has not Katharine Lee Bates expressed the full meaning of the mood of national satisfaction with its social qualifications in "America the Beautiful?" Re-read the hymn and consider how you would estimate our suggestion.

2. *Comfort and Religious Experience*

Comfort is a lesser sense of well being than prosperity. It is being warm, well-fed, healthy, decently paid, kindly recognized. Can any true religion arise out of such carnal satisfaction? Do they not suggest that unpleasant Babbitt-like optimist who thanks God because his trough is full?

Read Proverbs 30:7–9. This man recognizes the religious dangers of both prosperity and adversity. The man who has everything does not need God; the man who has nothing cannot afford a religion that might prevent him from getting his bread. Comfort seems the safe condition to this wise man. If I have not much I realize my need and so remember the Giver of all; and if I am not too poor I shall not be tempted to dishonesty. It is not a very high religious aspiration, but it is not unreasonable. Has not religion after all come out of the great middle class? The rich man is so far removed from the struggle of life that it is very difficult for him to enter into its meaning; the poor man is so lost in the struggle that he is often overwhelmed. I hope I would walk humbly with God if I had a vast fortune; I hope I would not lose my faith if I walked the streets alone friendless and penniless in the pitiful search for a job; but I do naturally find God's blessing in the daily work with its limited rewards and responsibilities. Doubtless there are dangers for the smug middle class also. He must pray other prayers besides this.

Read Luke 22:14–20; John 6:11; Acts 27:35. Why give thanks before a meal? And why pray, "Give us this day our daily bread"? Is there any religious experience in eating food? We may say that the custom goes back to primitive times, to very simple religion, and that it survives only as a form. It was scarcely a form to Jesus. He preserved it in the climacteric moment of the Last Supper. Paul gave thanks as he distributed bread on the slippery deck of the wrecked ship; no forms were called for there. Life is from God, in him "we live and move and have our being." As then we take the daily food that sustains life we are thankful. It is a goodly custom. It is the one form of family religion for which we cannot complain that we have no time. It was not an empty form with Jesus nor with Paul. The food was a new reminder of the God of all goodness. Consider whether this custom has some larger possibilities than many of us have realized. Recall your childhood experience and consult others.

Read Philippians 4:10–20. The purpose of this exquisite letter is to thank the distant friends, who, hearing that Paul was in prison, had sent one of their number with a sum of money for those comforts which a prisoner sorely needs. Paul was most happy for the friendship that prompted the gift, but he was happy in the gift also. The circumstance developed a beautiful religious experience for the troubled, persecuted man. He thanked God as he thanked his friends. It was a new evidence of that blessed human love that comes out of the divine love. And the apostle enjoyed the good things that were bought with the money. Not that his religion depended on comforts. He knew how to be hungry. He had learned the great spiritual secret of superiority to circumstance. Loss, want, hunger resulted in the religious experience of faith, devotion, even elation. But comfort produced its own religious experience of well being and gratitude. Indeed, it led to the composition of this letter, one of the noblest of Paul's utterances.

3. *The Family and Religious Experience*

1. *Marriage.*—Most peoples have connected marriage with religion. Doubtless it was often the mere desire for a lucky (do we not still say auspicious) beginning of the marital career or the prayer that it might be blessed with offspring. But as love became refined and the sanctity of marriage developed, the religious experience deepened.

Read Psalm 45, which is an epithalamium written upon the occasion of the king's marriage. Consider how the joy of the coming of the princess to be the royal spouse, thus crowning the happiness of the successful and righteous king, yields the sense of the divine favor. Doubtless there is an

idealism in this description of the king, but this may be more than the adulation of a poet laureate; it may be the expression of hope of what the true king should be. It later attained messianic significance and is so quoted in the New Testament, but its original and natural meaning gives us an illustration of the feeling of God's goodness in the blessedness of life so strikingly revealed in the supreme joy of connubial love.

The Song of Songs is a collection of love lyrics composed about the marriage of peasant lovers. Whether it has some dramatic quality presenting the glory of a love marriage over against the mere ambition of a royal alliance is not certain. Nor has the poem any distinct religious quality. But why did the scribes include it in the Hebrew canon and why did the Church Fathers accept it? Because earthly love is a symbol of divine love. Because these analogies of fellowship, communion, happy alliance of lovers suggested the union of the soul with its supreme object of adoration.

Read Hosea, chapters 1–3. It is the tragic story of love betrayed. But the husband who so tenderly regards the woman who has forsaken him and finds in his own compassion the analogy of God's love for his faithless people must have had an exquisite experience of the joy and beauty of love when he took his bride. Thankfulness to God for this wonderful experience must have filled his heart.

The analogy of the divine love with connubial affection is common in the Bible. Jehovah is a husband to his people. This finds its counterpart in the New Testament in the thought of the church as the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22–33; Rev. chapter 21).

2. *The birth of children.*—The religious experience arising from the coming of children as the gift of God is very evident in the Hebrew life. It is not so clear that the actual birth was religiously celebrated because the old superstitious taboo connected with the mystery of life regarded the mother as unclean. However, the circumcision feast was a most significant religious ceremonial. It was joyous because a new member was added to the covenant of Israel. Read Luke 1:57–79 and endeavor to picture a Jewish home rejoicing in the wondrous gift of a child to the parents. The biblical instances of this great joy are generally connected with the miracle of the gift of a son to childless parents, as in this case of John. See also Gen. 21:1–7; Judge, ch. 13; I Sam., ch. 1, 2. But in the case of the son born to Ruth and so greatly welcomed by Naomi (Ruth 4:13–17) we have the normal case of rejoicing at the birth of the child and ascription of praise to God for his blessed gift.

Psalm 127 indicates the religious spirit in which the Hebrews accepted their children. The Magnificat (Luke 1:39–57) reveals the joy

of the young mother in God's gracious gift to her. Evidently in this recurring miracle of new life men and women have felt the power and goodness of God. In the tender love of parents for the child they have found a religious experience. Doubtless this goes deeper than mere happiness and becomes a sense of responsibility for the training of the child, but the happiness is genuine, and through it the soul is lifted into fellowship with God.

3. *Home life.*—With the help of a concordance look up the passages in the Gospels in which Jesus speaks of God as Father. What experience had Jesus of a father? It has often been remarked that a wonderful tribute to the little-known, the overshadowed Joseph, who so soon drops out of the Gospel records, is Jesus' tender use of the filial experience of being fathered, which is evident in his references to the fatherliness of God. Is it fanciful to think that the humble home of the carpenter of Nazareth was rendered happy by the tenderness and care of the father as well as by the affection of the mother? The church may have lightly esteemed and almost forgotten Joseph, but Jesus did not. "What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone?" Jesus knew that a father would not do that.

Jesus had a goodly childhood (Luke 2:52) in the family and education experience, and out of his happiness he gained his early conception of God, ever to him the Father.

4. *National Celebrations and Religious Experience*

We have already considered in Study I the religious experience that arises in contemplation of the outer world of nature—awe, reverence, wonder. There is also the sheer joy of living in the world, happy in the God who gives us life. Among the Hebrews this expressed itself in the festivals in which they celebrated the cycles of the year. Passover was originally the spring festival, celebrating the joy of man in the new life after winter (compare Song of Songs 2:11–13). It was later given the national and religious significance of commemorating the deliverance from Egypt (Exod., ch. 12). Note II Kings, 23:21–23.

The beautiful story of Jesus' visit to Jerusalem with his parents at the feast of Passover (Luke 2:41–51) suggests the great interest in the celebration. Look up a description of the pilgrimage[1] and note what a joyous event it was in the life of the people. It was a great annual outing in the delight of the springtime. Families and neighbors went together. It was a leisurely journey through the fields brilliant with flowers and

[1] See Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah.*

over the hills becoming green with the early pasturage. The lambs and kids frisked about with the flocks. Life was happy and fellowship was pleasant. Everything led thoughts Godward in gratitude and praise. Moreover, patriotic memories dwelt upon the glories of the past and prayer was lifted up for new deliverance.

The Feast of Booths was the great festival of joy, for the harvest was in and the labors of the year were crowned with success. Then was the time to eat the fat and drink the sweet and send portions to the less fortunate (Neh. 8:9–12). Men have always rejoiced at harvest. The prophets often refer to the exultant experience (Isa. 9:3). The sense of prosperity and of well being is very keen. And men have naturally thanked God. It would be well, with the help of a concordance, to look up all the references to harvest and to the Feast of Booths and to note the religious experiences which are manifest in the celebrants.

Consult Edersheim or some other source for a description of the festal details of the harvest celebration. It must have been a merry holiday to leave the regular houses and live in the leafy booths of the harvest fields. Such break in routine and picnic-like living is just what we enjoy in our summer outings and our automobile tours. The family was united in the happy enterprise, while the good things to eat and drink which came out of the harvest made the festival peculiarly joyous. It was not the excessive prosperity that made men proud and self-sufficient; it was the bounteous gift of nature that made them lift their hearts to God in gratitude. Again there was the national interpretation that the booths should remind them of the days of their desert wanderings, but this would only enhance their sense of well-being in the goodly land of wheat fields, olive yards, and vineyards.

5. *Future Happiness and Religious Experience*

While the deeper religious experiences of the Bible grow out of conflict with trouble, sorrow, and pain, they very generally include the hope of eventual happiness. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." This hope is often the ground of the religious feeling, though it is not always so. Job's profound faith comes in the vision of God, with no thought that his calamities are to pass away. He has God and that is enough. Indeed, it is felt by many that the Epilogue in which the patriarch is restored to prosperity mars the message of the book and is probably not original. Read the noble declaration of faith in Habakkuk 3:16–19 and recognize a religion that is independent of external satisfactions.

But the religious faith of the Bible is for the most part a confidence that God is in control of the world and that he will eventually vindicate the righteous, bring iniquity to naught, and give prosperity and happiness to his people. There is very evident a religious experience growing out of anticipated well being.

Read Amos 9:11–15. This is so different from the general tone of the book that some scholars regard it as a later addition designed to offset the gloom of condemnation. Be this as it may, whoever wrote the passage was exulting in the prospects of the good time coming.

Read Isa. 9:1–7 and 11:1–9. The prophet is looking away from the wretched circumstances of his day when weak and careless kings have failed to lead the nation aright. He sees a better time coming when God's king shall reign, when righteousness and peace shall prevail. See also Isa. 2:2–4; Mic. 4:1–5; Jer. ch. 33, and in fact all those brilliant passages of hope that express the prophetic sense of future triumph. To be sure, this religious experience does not grow out of personal happiness. The prophet is rejoicing in the prosperity that shall some day come to his people, but which he himself may not share. But it is a religion of joy and happiness; it is an expectation of the manifestation of God's goodness and love in abundant harvests, noble cities, social equity, and universal peace.

In the New Testament the future happiness is removed beyond this life, or at least beyond this age. But none the less religious experience is very definitely stimulated by the expectation of happiness. Paul even goes so far as to suggest that without the hope of immortality his Christian faith would be pitiable (I Cor. 15:19). He probably would not have said that, however, if he had not been so sure of immortality.

We have said that religion that grows out of happiness is not the highest kind, but that it is very natural and not unworthy, while of course it must be supplemented by more significant religious experiences. May the same thing be said of the religion that looks to future happiness? It may quite separate one from the practical world, as we have felt when we have deprecated "otherworldliness." But it may be a blessed hope lighting the way in the present struggle and uncertainty. So Jesus found it; so the Christian saints have found it. To many of us the faith that triumph is ahead for the race, and that each of us shall personally share in it, is the completion of our confidence that a great Goodness is moving through all life.

III. *Illustrations from Christian History and Modern Life*

1. *From Rituals of Worship*

To a very great extent the same experiences found in the Bible continued through Christian history and many of them persist in the life of today.

Examine a number of church rituals—the *Book of Common Prayer*, the *Book of Common Worship*, the *Methodist Manual*—and note how far the prayers have reference to health, happiness, and well being. For example, the "General Thanksgiving" blesses God for "our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life." Among the Thanksgiving prayers are those for the "joyful rain" and again for a "seasonable and blessed change of weather"; gratitude for plenty, for peace, for health, for safe return from sea. Consider the prayers used in your own church. Does the minister ever pray out of experiences of happiness—the beauty of the day, the satisfactions of family life, the joy of nationality, even the prosperity of business?

Look through a church hymnal and see if there are any hymns that express gratitude for life and well being. What is the theme of "Now Thank We All Our God"? What is the theme of Addison's hymn that runs through the experiences of life? What does the doxology mean by "all blessings"? Does it include the temporal goods?

What of your own religious experience? Do you have any feelings of gratitude arising out of prosperity, either personal or national? Ask some persons whose religious character seems of a high quality whether they are ever conscious of such feeling. Do these feelings seem to you unworthy? Ought one to be so conscious of the conditions of misfortune and unhappiness of millions of his fellow-men that his own good fortune should give him no satisfaction? Should the pitiful plight of many other nations make us feel that any satisfaction in our own well being is mean and ungenerous?

Doubtless there is spiritual danger in prosperity. If it makes us selfish, unsympathetic, greedy for this world's goods it is producing only irreligion. If we accept it as our due and feel that we are the kind of people that ought to be blessed, then again it may detract from spirituality. But if we are in business and are seeking honestly to succeed, if with success we are anxious for the socialization of business life; if as citizens we are trying to develop a good corporate enterprise, carrying on our common concerns effectively; if as workers we are seeking to better our conditions, secure larger wages, safer and healthier factory life, old-age pensions, and the like; if we are building schools, colleges, hospitals,

playgrounds, gymnasiums, opera houses, and institutions for education, health, and recreation—and if in all these activities we are successful, should we not feel that the divine favor is with us and "praise God from whom all blessings flow"? As a matter of our own experience, do we not actually develop religiously by just this process? Perhaps trouble, struggle, defeat are more effective—this we need not argue. But there is a religious experience possible and desirable out of the good success of our activities and undertakings.

2. *The Joy of Living as Viewed by the Church*

The early church became ascetic. God was found through giving up lesser goods. Men were so afraid of the joys of the flesh that they renounced them in order to secure the joys of the spirit. The monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience meant that those who desired to be religious in the highest sense would forever give up the happiness of wealth, the delight of fellowship with the other sex, and the satisfaction of self-direction.

The humanism of the Renaissance was a frank opposition to the asceticism of the Middle Ages. It was a recovery of the Greek joy of life, glory of humanness. It was an affirmation that the body is good and not bad, that pleasure is our human right, and is not a sin. True, much of the Renaissance was pagan. It was a definite preference of beautiful paganism to somber Christianity. Greek gods were more admirable than Christian saints, certainly more delightsome to the eyes. The romantic drama was to be desired above the miracle and mystery plays.

Puritans looked upon the revival of the heathen joy of life with horror, and gathered their children to keep them unspotted from the world. But the Puritan developed his own temporal satisfactions. He was frugal, thrifty, abstemious, but he believed that God would prosper the righteous. He became the man of business. One of the most significant developments of Protestantism was the comfortable prosperity of the godly men who renounced what they called "worldliness." Note the commercial success of the Scottish Presbyterians, of the English and American Puritans, of the Quakers, and even of those communistic religious sects, such as the Mennonites. It is interesting to note that they put a marked value upon the Old Testament, and easily accepted the promises of material blessing. The practical wisdom of Proverbs appealed to them, and they taught their children to follow the good counsels of the sages of Israel. This is not to say that their religion was merely concerned with reward. These pious people met disaster with courage and faith. But the simple happiness of good living was part of their faith in God.

The great Free Church of England grew out of these middle-class merchants. They were narrow in their social outlook; they were not very considerate of the people beneath them; but they were honest, thrifty, dependable, moral, temperate. Their religious experience included a sense of God's goodness as manifest in their well being, in the prosperity of their churches, in the success of their religious enterprises. Those Free Churchmen were foremost in the missionary and philanthropic undertakings of the nineteenth century.

That religion put more emphasis upon philanthropy than on social justice, and the virtue of honesty was strictly individualistic. We are in the midst of a challenge of their whole theory of life in our search for a social interpretation of religion. But in their day they were genuinely religious, and a wise socialization of religion will not lose sight of the solid values of their honesty and piety.

The pleasure aspects of the revival of humanism, which the Puritan, the Quaker, and the Methodist refused to take into their religion, are today claiming attention. An advertisement in a street car showed a splendid, athletic fellow, clear of eye, clean of skin, vital and vigorous, with the interpretative legend "Ready for the Game of Life." Beside it was the triangle and the letters Y.M.C.A. In the magnificent Association buildings are gymnasiums, swimming-pools, billiard tables. It is a revival of the Greek interest in the superb development of the human body. The Christian associations have built what they call their four-square program: physical, mental, social, spiritual. They gain religious experience from each of these activities. They exalt joyous living, temperance and not asceticism, the choice of pure healthy pleasure as against degrading self-indulgence. They take Jesus' great word in its fullest possible sense: "I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it abundantly."

Religious education is making the same emphasis. We do not teach children that they are pilgrims and strangers passing through a wicked world, but that they are citizens in a world that is to be made a healthy, happy place for all God's children. We teach them to give thanks for happy homes, pleasant playgrounds, good companions, hearty sports, and for all the joys of life. One of our best attempts in religious education is the summer camps, where the days and weeks pass in delightful freedom, honest work, vital recreation in the out-of-doors. About the camp fire in the evening, after the stories are told and the fun is done, the day closes with a beautiful reverence—all the joy of life is felt to be the gift of the great Giver.[1]

[1] Read Davies, *Out of Doors with Youth*, as a significant illustration of religious experience growing out of this joy of life.

Lest we be misunderstood, let it be said again that this is not the whole of religious education. Projects of helpfulness and co-operation, contributions to human need, some increasing appreciation of the harder aspects of life, a part, graded to the capacity of the young people, in the struggle for righteousness, practice in worship—all these must be included in the training of our children. But we are definitely seeking to bring them into fellowship with God through their joys.

Browning has contrasted the ascetic and the joyful types of life in his poem of the two camels. One of them, anxious to serve his master, ate barely enough to keep him alive and succumbed under his burden before the journey was complete, while the other took every succulent food that was provided, eating enjoyably and heartily, chewing well the good things, and carried his master's goods to their destination.

3. *Christian Festivals*

The church year has in it much of joy even ecclesiastically considered, and more in its popular use. Christmas is one of the happiest occasions in our modern life, as it has been through the centuries. We develop religious experience, not only from the deep wonder of the birth of Christ with the exquisite stories of angels and Magi and the lovely Advent music, but also from the gifts, the visitors, the good cheer, the fun with the children about Santa Claus, and all that makes the joy of the great winter holiday. And in our experience we do not separate the two; we do not feel that part is religious and part secular. As religious people the joy of Christmas brings us near to God. We are glad to remember the poor; we want everyone to be happy; but we do not fail to find in our own happiness the evidences of divine love and goodness.

Dickens' *Christmas Carol* is a classic presentation of the significance of the festival as the time of gift and love. How happy are the people who love; how miserable the poor wretch who has thought only of himself! How beautiful is the religion in the home of the ill-paid clerk, where love gives its warmth and color to the simple good cheer, and where Tiny Tim says "God bless us all." It would be difficult to differentiate in this story the religious elements from those which belong to the festival of kindness. The spirit of Christ is in it all, and especially in the regenerated soul of Scrooge.

The New Year festival is religious. It has its own peculiar joys—holidays, feasts, parties (not the revelry of drunkenness, the saturnalia which disgraces certain types of society), exchange of greetings. We mean it when we say "Happy New Year." And the happiness may be deeply religious. We feel how good it is to live, to have friends, to be busy, to frolic, and to love. How naturally in many of our churches in place of the

old solemn watch-night service we have a supper, an evening of games and music, a joyous fellowship, and then most fittingly, as the last hour of the old year dies away, we pass into the serious mood, and lifting up our hearts in reverence we say, "Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations."

Easter, following upon Lent and Holy Week, is a more solemn festival, and its joy is the deep and holy joy of life triumphant over death; but it is not without its commoner happiness. We do not mean the vulgarity of Easter parades and fine clothes, but the joy of the spring festival, the wonder of life. Winter is gone; buds are breaking from the boughs; birds are singing; the ever new miracle of the resurrection of nature makes our hearts glad. We celebrate with beautiful music and flowers. We feel that the living God is among us.

Make a similar study of the patriotic festivals: Lincoln's and Washington's birthdays, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Armistice Day. Consider how far the experience of happiness and the sense of well being are connected with the religious meanings of those days. Does the joy spoil the religious quality of the celebrations? If so, is it necessarily so, or is it because we have secularized and vulgarized a great opportunity instead of combining joy and religious feeling?

Thanksgiving merits special study. It is a festival expressing the universal human experience of the joy of harvest. The deeply religious character of the Pilgrim celebration is evident. That stricken colony had held days of fasting and prayer. They had kept their faith while disease and famine decimated their ranks. But at last the first harvest of the New World had come. They set apart a day for thanksgiving and praise.

Read a number of Thanksgiving proclamations of presidents and governors and estimate their religious quality. Is there ever too much national complacency? Do they exhibit us as the favorites of providence? Do they suggest that prosperity is a sign of the divine approval? How far do they seem to you genuine and natural expressions of gratitude for the good world and its bounty? What is your own experience of Thanksgiving? What place has gratitude for prosperity in your religion? How significant is the Thanksgiving service in the churches of your community? Estimate the contribution of the religious experience of the Thanksgiving festival to our theme.

4. *Family Festivals*

There is a continuity between Christian practice and the biblical examples in the celebrations of domestic events. The religious sanctity of

marriage was even more definitely carried out in the church. In the Catholic church it became a sacrament indissoluble. The Protestants made of it a civil contract, but highly exalted its religious character. The marriage service was an occasion of deep religious importance. So this great joy of life has been linked with the experience of God as the Giver of every good and perfect gift. Read the marriage service and estimate its religious quality.

There is some anxiety among us as to the future of marriage. Is it to be less highly regarded than in the past? Should divorce be made even more easy, perhaps procurable at the pleasure of the parties? The answer to these questions must come from a careful and scientific study of modern life, but the religious conception of marriage and of parenthood will go far toward creating the right attitude for making the study.

In the exquisite love experience of the Brownings the fellowship even beyond this life gives a religious quality to the whole experience. He describes the approach of death:

> Then a joy out of pain; then thy breast
> O, thou soul of my soul, I shall clasp thee again,
> And with God be the rest.

The christening or dedication service combines the joy of parenthood with the religious sense of holy obligation for training the little life newly given to us from God. To some parents the birth of a child has given such a sense of the wonder and beauty of life that the radiant happiness of the experience has been vitally religious. Churches will do well to make more of the dedication ceremony. We are getting away from baptismal controversies, so that the churches which reserve baptism for the later period of confession of faith are increasingly developing ceremonials of infant dedication.

Many churches have a day in the year when parents bring all the babies for a very brief thanksgiving and renewed dedication. It is always a happy occasion. While the sense of responsibility is clear, there is also very vivid the joy of parenthood.

Birthdays are among the happiest family festivals. Wise parents are making them more significant. For that day even the young child is the center of the family life. All bring him presents; all wish him well; the feast is in his honor; the joy of life is especially manifest in his achievement of a new stage in his journey. How natural may be the religious quality of the celebration. It will not be obtruded; it will not be overemphasized. It may be just the attitude of reverence and gratitude to the Giver of all.

5. *Future Happiness*

How far has the New Testament experience of finding religious value in the contemplation of the bliss of the future life survived in our own religion? What does it mean in your own experience? It is not necessarily "other worldliness," but may be a very satisfying hope that this life's incompleteness is to be rounded out in eternal well being.

Religion is fundamentally a sense of rapport with reality. The phrase "in tune with the infinite" is very suggestive. It is an experience of well being here and forever. It may be a faith that no good shall ever be lost, that no love shall ever be wasted, that no human aspiration shall ever be futile, that no spiritual hope shall ever be disappointed.

Let us insist yet once more that we are not attempting to describe religion in its fulness. How shallow and selfish a faith would be that was the outgrowth of happiness alone. We are insisting that the joyous, happy, festival experiences of life may have their own religious quality, and that fulness of life requires that we find religious meaning in these aspects of our varied circumstance as well as in those higher and nobler aspects which we are considering in the other studies.

In joy I find Him,
In every exquisite delight of sense,
In the expansive happiness when life is free,
In laughter and in play,
In song and comradeship, in wit and fun,
In the recurrent feasts when we make merry
In all that makes me feel that life is good
I find my God, who formed me to be glad.

IV. *The Method of Christian Joy*

The personal problem for experimentation which we have in this study is twofold: (1) How can we increase our capacity for enjoyment? (2) How can we preserve our critical moral judgment and our Christian aspiration in the midst of these joys? The second part of this dual problem is much more complicated and difficult than the first. It arises out of the fact that joy in things as they are is likely to assume the form of complacency; and complacency is death to aspiration. How can we enjoy what is, without impairing our aspiration toward that better world which God wills to make out of this one. But we shall not treat this second part of our problem until we have first made answer to the question, how to increase our capacity for enjoyment.

1. *How to Enjoy the World*

Everyone has something he should be able to enjoy. What you have I do not have, and what I have you do not, but everyone has something if he will be appreciative of it. Very simple things we have in mind as well as great things, such as good food when hungry, rest when weary, trees, sky, friends, happy faces, and the like. The list of things to enjoy is endless. One may be sick and not able to enjoy food, but he has something else. Another may not have the kind ministration of affectionate hands when he is ill, but there is another source of joy for him. Our problem is to enter into full appreciation and enjoyment of these good things Our happiness might be many times greater than it is if we had the mental attitudes which enable one to appreciate to the full all the good things round about. Let us mention some of the wrong mental attitudes which must be corrected if we are to enter into the fulness of that joy which should be ours.

First is the feeling some people have that they are failing to meet some moral or religious requirement when they freely and fully enjoy such simple things as food and clothes and play. This feeling is correct only when the lesser good blinds us to the greater. How to avoid such blindness will engage our attention later. But when such blindness is not incurred there is nothing wrong in the greatest possible enjoyment of simple things. Some people have this mental habit of condemning simple joys so fixed that even when they know it is wrong to condemn them they cannot enter into them with freedom, and so their happiness is marred. This old habit must be rooted out like any other bad habit. There are many methods for overcoming a bad habit, one of which is worshipful auto-suggestion.

A much more common hindrance to enjoyment of that which is good and pleasant is worry and anxiety. We are so anxious about the future that we cannot enjoy the present. We are so fearful lest we lose our health or comfort or friends or security or other good thing that we cannot enjoy these good things while we have them. Or we are like Martha, so cumbered about many things that the one thing needful we miss. The one thing needful is to enjoy the visitor when he is present with us, whether he come in the form of a sunset, or tall tree, or a singing bird, or a child tugging at our hand, or a pleasant fire on a winter evening, or what not.

The most common hindrance of our enjoyment of good things, however, especially here in America, is our restless striving after something not yet attained. There are times when we must be preoccupied with

striving. A surgeon engaged in a delicate operation cannot at the same time enjoy the sunset. A man struggling to save another from drowning cannot listen to the sweet music of birds. Life must have its seasons of stern struggle when the eyes are turned away from all the sweet and lovely things around us to the end of achieving something which is not yet attained.

But our absorption in that which is not yet attained must not make us permanently unappreciative of what is already given to us. We must not be so absorbed in making the child into a good man that we cannot appreciate and rejoice in the child for what he already is. We must not be so intent on getting to the end of the picture gallery that we cannot enjoy the pictures that we pass. We must not be so preoccupied in making money for a better home that we cannot enjoy the home we already have. We must not be so strenuous in our efforts to bring the tour to a successful end that we cannot enjoy it as we go along. We must not try so hard to achieve some ultimate and unattained success that we destroy the value of every success that we ever do attain.

The only way to solve this problem is by the method of alternation. Seasons of striving and aspiration after the unattained must alternate with seasons of enjoying the good things already here. After the surgeon has completed the operation he must take some time when he can enjoy the sunset. After the terrible struggle over the drowning man there must be some time when one can listen to the birds.

This relaxation and enjoyment of the present moment, this quieting of the rush and striving after something which is still beyond us, this joy in the life which is already ours must be cultivated. Perhaps most Americans need this side of life cultivated more than any other. A good method for cultivating it is to go out for a walk in park or open country some pleasant evening, either alone or with some very dear and intimate friend with whom you do not need to talk except as mood may require. Loitering thus together or alone in the quiet dusk of evening is the best time for cultivating the attitude of relaxation. One can give himself regular doses of this kind of treatment. For many of this age it is just as needful as medical treatment in time of physical illness.

A fourth great hindrance to joy is envy. We cannot enjoy our own clothes because they are not as good as another's. We cannot enjoy our work because it does not seem so honorable as another's. Our success seems not as great as another's, hence it is bitterness in the mouth rather than sweetness. We want what another has, and so cannot enjoy our own. Naboth's vineyard, because it belongs to him and not to us, de-

stroys all the joy we might have in our own acres. So we turn away our face and will eat no bread, like King Ahab.

Men have found joy in every kind of condition. (Phil. 4, notably vs. 2). If we cannot rejoice in the things which every man has to enjoy, then we are suffering from some perversion of mental attitude. Why do we not get more joy out of life? Why do we not enter into that fulness of joy which Jesus said he wished us to have? (John 15:2). The fault is our own. We destroy our own happiness. How? By a mistaken Puritanic habit which will not let us surrender to the joy of the passing hour. Or by some goading anxiety and worry that has got us in its clutches and will not let us go. Or by a habit of strenuous striving which has become so fixed as a mental attitude that we cannot throw it off in periods of relaxation that should alternate with periods of striving. Or by envy of what other people have.

2. *How to Cure the Joy-Killing Attitude*

We have already suggested some measures for curing mistaken Puritanism and that strenuosity which has become a disease. But we can now lay down the principle for the cure of all four of these ills. The method of cure is to ascertain what is the right attitude which is the exact opposite of your wrong attitude, and pray for it persistently and regularly day by day until it grows up within you. If the wrong attitude is a mistaken Puritanism, the right and opposing attitude would be one of joyous acceptance and appreciation of every good thing. If the wrong attitude is worry, the right would be peaceful adaptation to every changing condition as it arises, with flexible readiness to use and enjoy to the utmost whatever may befall. If the wrong attitude is habitual strenuosity which cannot relax, the right would be restfulness and self-abandon to the hour of relaxation. If the wrong attitude is envy, the right is identifying yourself with the joy and success of the other so that his good becomes yours also.

3. *How to Preserve Critical Moral Judgment and Christian Aspiration in the Midst of Our Joys*

A life overflowing with joy in the good things of this world, such as we have suggested, will dull the keenness of our moral judgment and drag down the highest aspiration unless in the midst of our enjoyment we meet four requirements.

The first of these four is to keep ourselves intensely conscious of the

unfathomable possibilities for good which are inherent in this present world despite all its evil. The second is to be deeply sensitive to the fact that this present actual world is immeasurably degraded and evil as compared to these possibilities for good which are inherent in it. The third requirement is that we use this present world as material out of which to construct that other better world. This means that we must enter into the fullest and richest experience of this world, entering into all its joys as well as its sorrows; for only as we learn to experience it, know it, master it, and use it can we make it better. If we do not enter into full appreciation of the joys of this present world, as well as of its pains and evils, we cut ourselves off from the materials, the standing-ground, the leverage, and the nourishment by which alone that other better world can ever be brought into existence.

The fourth and last and greatest requirement of all which must be met if we are to enjoy the world in a Christian way is to hold ourselves constantly in readiness to make any sacrifice whatsoever when such sacrifice seems to be the best thing we can do to bring forth that other better world. But we must understand what sacrifice means. It does not consist in being miserable. It consists in just the opposite. It consists in taking pain, sorrow, loss, and death and transmuting these into joy and goodness by making them contributory to the attainment of the best world which is the Kingdom of God. Such is the way Jesus met pain, sorrow, and death, and so could look upon the travail of his soul and be satisfied.

Any sacrifice which is not made as a contribution to the high end of attaining a better world, any sacrifice which is made merely to demonstrate our own righteousness or to express our condemnation of evil is not only mistaken, useless, and foolish; it is positively evil. The sacrifice which Jesus recommended was, not that we lose our lives, but that we lose them in order to save them. The sacrifice he recommended was never morbid. Never refuse a joy unless the refusing of it will yield a greater joy. That is what is meant by losing one's life to save it.

With this understanding of sacrifice we can say that readiness for such sacrifice on all occasions is needed if we are to enjoy the world in a Christian way. Without readiness for such sacrifice the joys of the world will distort our moral judgment, pervert our Christian aspiration, and blind us to those vast possibilities which constitute the Kingdom of God. With this sacrifice, and with this only, can we enter into that full measure of joy which Jesus knew and which he desired us to have.

In this final section of our study we have suggested two kinds of personal experiments in religion. One kind had to do with cultivating

our capacity for enjoying the good things of life. The other had to do with preserving our moral judgment and our aspiration in the midst of these joys.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. If Job may be an illustration of religious experience through happiness, what would you say about St. Francis? (See Study I).
2. Give other illustrations from the Old Testament of personal happiness contributing to religious experience.
3. Give illustrations of the contribution of physical comfort to religious experience.
4. How commonly is "the blessing before meals" used in families of your community?
5. How may it foster religious experience?
6. What evidences does the Bible yield of the sacredness of the marriage relation among the Hebrews?
7. What light does Jesus' conception of fatherhood and sonship throw upon the life of his own home?
8. On what occasions did the great nature feasts express the religious joy of the Hebrews?
9. What attitude toward God is the key to all this joy?
10. How does this attitude lead to confidence in a future life?
11. What hymns have you found, additional to those mentioned, which express religious joy?
12. To what extent have the public prayers which you have heard recently expressed joy and gratitude?
13. How did the early Christians feel about the joy of life in the realm of nature?
14. Discuss the attitude of the Puritans toward pleasure and beauty.
15. What may be said to be "revivals" in the attitude of religion toward joy today?
16. How do we express these in our religious education methods and aims?
17. How can Christian festivals help us in this task of education?
18. What family festivals will be consecrated to this task?
19. Name some of the commonest hindrances to the enjoyment of life, with their antidotes.
20. What four requirements, if fulfilled, will enable us to maintain Christian poise in living with our joys?

Study VII[1]

Religious Experience through Crises in Individual Growth and Social Experience

I. *Personality Achieved through Experience*

One of the deepest insights of modern psychology has been into the relation of experience to the achievement of personality. It has become increasingly clear that persons realize themselves through the experiences which they have. It has also become increasingly clear that in its essential nature experience is the outgrowth of the process by which persons adjust themselves to their world, both physical and social, including God. It is through this process of adjustment that persons become intelligent, social, appreciative of the beauty of the world, moral, and religious.

1. *Personality a process.*—Experience, moreover, is constantly undergoing change. This is true in any case. But when we consider the complexity of our world whose manifold aspects are being revealed by our increasing understanding of it, and the rapidly changing conditions of our modern life, we are quite prepared to appreciate how fundamental and rapid are the changes which experience under the conditions of modern life undergoes.

For this reason personality is to be thought of, not as a given and static thing, but as a *process*, a *becoming*. It changes as experience changes and because experience changes. It is, therefore, at any given moment a more or less stable organization of impulses, habits, ideas, attitudes, ideals, purposes.

2. *Personality an achievement.*—It is this fact of change that makes possible the continuous reconstruction of experience. The present in any growing person's life is the forward-moving point that unites the past and the future. The present moment is the outgrowth of some past experience. And the present moment will in turn become the past out of which some new future self will emerge with new insights into life, with new outlook upon its meaning, with new attitudes, with new ideals, with new purposes. In the present lie the factors that are capable of producing change.

[1] Professors William C. Bower and Henry N. Wieman have co-operated in the preparation of this study (see Table of Contents).

Now it is possible for this change to be nothing more than change. In that event personality is merely the *result* of unconscious, uncontrolled, and meaningless events in one's life. It is even possible for personality to disintegrate under these processes of aimless change. But when the person becomes conscious of his experiences, when he perceives meaning in them, when he organizes them through criticism and evaluation, when he introduces intelligence and purpose into them—then mere *change* is transformed into *achievement.*

And this is precisely what all personality of the higher orders is. It is the result of the conscious, intelligent, evaluating, purposive ordering of experience for the attainment of the highest ends of life. Personality of this order does not just happen. It is not the result of what others do to or for one. It is the result of the person becoming aware of himself, of his securing insights into the nature and meaning of his experience, and of his getting control of his experience.

3. *Religious personality attained through the religious quality of experience.*—The fundamental processes that determine the achievement of religious personality do not differ from the processes that determine the achievement of any other type of personality. Personality is the result of the organization of many qualities, such as intelligence, sociality, moral discrimination, love of the beautiful, reverence. Religion is not a unique experience, isolated from the rest of life. Rather, it is a quality that permeates all experience. It is that quality which attaches to any experience when it is viewed in relation to the total meaning and worth of life in terms of its relation to God. Thus as persons are intelligent when they act with discrimination with reference to the situations which life presents and form accurate judgments with reference to their possible outcomes, so they are religious when they interpret any situation which life presents in terms of its relation to God.

In this way it will be seen that every experience contributes to the content and meaning of the religious aspect of life, while religion, in turn, modifies every experience by giving it new meaning and intensity through resetting it in its eternal and Godward relations. It is, therefore, in the movement of life's manifold and meaningful experiences—in the family, in business, in intellectual pursuits, in noble enjoyment, in civic responsibility, in interracial and intercultural contacts—that one is to seek the religious quality of experience, and it is in these areas of experience that religion is to function, if it is to function at all, in the reordering of these experiences by which men live on a spiritual basis. It is here that God appears in human life, and it is here that human nature is remade by a continual process of spiritual reconstruction.

4. *Not all experiences are of equal value.*—It is obvious that not all experiences are of equal value for the achievement of personality. Some experiences are very simple and have no lasting and significant content of meaning. Some experiences are frequent and recurrent, and after once being mastered are easily reduced to routine. Other experiences, on the other hand, are extremely significant and complex and are fraught with a depth of meaning that carries over a long span of years.

On the whole, as will appear in later paragraphs, the most significant experiences in the development of personality and in the enrichment of life are the crisis situations, both in personal experience and in the life of the group. The crisis situations are the points at which experience opens up so that its meaning and significance are better understood and the factors that make it amenable to control are laid bare. These are the points at which the smooth movement of life is interrupted, where delays between the encountering of a situation and the response that one makes to it occur, where life is thrown back upon its deeper meanings and resources. They are the points at which the remaking of life through the reorganization of its ends, its motives, and its procedures takes place most surely and advantageously. They are, therefore, of the greatest possible significance for the development of the religious life.

II. *Types of Crisis*

While there are many types of crisis in personal and social experience, it will be fruitful for the present purpose to consider two: the conscious and the unconscious.

The unconscious crisis.—It has long been recognized that hereditary factors are among the most determinative in human life. As a consequence, birth, where these factors working through many generations converge upon the newly launched career, is certainly one of the most determining unconscious crises in any human life.

It is only within very recent years, however, that we have come to understand how profoundly the early and unconscious experiences of children may affect the whole future direction of their lives. There are those who believe that most of one's attitudes throughout life are determined by the experiences that happen to him before the end of the third year.

Manifestly the unconscious crises, such as birth and the conditioning experience of early childhood, are induced by circumstances external to the child and over which he has no control. He is not even aware of them while his life is being molded by them. The chief implications of these

crises, therefore, are for parents and teachers and for all those who are responsible for ordering the birth and early life of childhood, particularly in the intimate contacts of the face-to-face groups. The child has the right to be well born with a sound equipment of body and mind that will enable him to make his adjustments properly with his world. Throughout the years of early childhood he has the right to wholesome influences that will open up to him the widest freedom to develop normally and to come to his own fullest self-realization.

The conscious crisis.—The crises with which this discussion is primarily concerned, however, are the conscious crises, the points in personal and social experience where the free-flowing movement of experience is broken, where responses to situations are delayed, where purposes are frustrated, where complex and difficult problems are encountered, where choices must be made among alternatives, where purposes are criticized and reorganized, and where perhaps the whole current of experience is thrown back upon itself, where new channels are cut, and where new resources are discovered.

III. *The Function of Crisis in the Reconstruction of Life*

There are a number of reasons why the crisis is one of the most fruitful resources which man possesses for securing insight into experience, for examining the basic assumptions of one's living, for the criticism of ends, for the reorganization of one's procedures, and for the resetting of life in terms of the profoundest meaning of the universe. However great may be the function of crisis in other aspects of experience, religious history and biography demonstrate that it is of profound significance for the enrichment and furthering of the religious life.

The crisis lifts experience into consciousness.—The first function of the crisis situation is to lift experience into clear consciousness. As long as activity is free-flowing, moving smoothly from impulse to end, the life-process remains almost wholly unconscious. It is when activity is broken or frustrated that it is lifted sharply into consciousness. As long as the delicate organs of the body are functioning properly and co-ordinated, one is scarcely aware of health. One may use a book or a tool day after day without being vividly aware of its existence. But if for any reason it has been misplaced so that it cannot be found when needed, it is raised sharply into consciousness. There is much experience distilled in the adage, "We never miss the water 'til the well runs dry."

Herein lies one of the chief weaknesses of our daily experience. We live on day after day in the midst of relationships and functions in which

we are caught up as strands in an intricately woven fabric, without ever being vividly conscious of them, to say nothing of having penetrating insight into their meaning or significance. Husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees, members of different races and cultures—these are but a few of the more general concrete relationships wherein and whereby persons live, since life consists in the perception and the fulfilment of these relations. Each of them, and a thousand and one more, involve delicate problems of adjustment. Nevertheless, persons whose experience has not been interrupted by crises of one sort or another may be living so completely under the influence of uncriticized assumptions or social habit that they may not so much as realize that there are any problems involved in these relationships. When some crisis arises in which one is at a loss to know what alternative to choose he becomes conscious of these relationships and is compelled to reflect upon them.

The crisis provides the conditions for reflective thinking.—The conditions under which reflective thinking as distinguished from rationalization occurs are now quite well understood. Much, perhaps most, of our thinking is rationalization. We rationalize when we assign logical and plausible reasons for doing what we wish on irrational grounds to do. We think reflectively when we feel problems, when we search for and face facts, when we criticize our assumptions, when we criticize different ways of doing in given situations, when we test out our conclusions in actual experience. These are the conditions which arise when experience is broken by delays or obstacles, when novel situations present themselves for which we have developed no smooth habits, and, in the most extreme form, when crises present themselves. Human experience in its highest and most characteristic quality should move on the level of reflective thinking. Here are the open ways to reality and the deeper meanings of life. It is here, and in the realm of values, that religious experience moves.

The significance of the crisis situation is clear when we consider the steps involved in reflective thinking. *First*, the problem is felt. *Second*, the situation is analyzed for its essential factors. If thinking goes wrong at this point the entire process is invalidated. To analyze the situation is to act with discrimination. The alternative is to react to the total situation as a confused and blurred mass or to react to the wrong factor. *Third*, a search is made of the person's own past experience—his attitudes, his knowledge, his habits, his purposes—for whatever may be pertinent to the solution of the present problem. It is in this search of that past experience that his knowledge is tested, his ideas criticized, his attitudes and purposes evaluated. *Fourth*, a search is made of the experi-

ence of the race for facts, techniques, and judgments that are capable of throwing light upon the present situation and of yielding the factors of control through understanding. In this way an experience that is undergoing intelligent reconstruction absorbs vast stores of knowledge and is thereby greatly enriched. *Fifth*, a search is made for all possible outcomes to the situation. A person whose experience is not thrown back upon itself is likely to overlook many significant outcomes, seeing only those that custom or habit have pointed out. *Sixth*, in the light of the best experience of the race, the possible outcomes are criticized and evaluated and a choice of that which seems to be the best is made. *Seventh*, the chosen outcome is tried out by a process of experimentation until it is demonstrated that it is the best solution. *Eighth*, the chosen solution is then adopted as a desirable way of life or of thinking and is made available for other similar situations. In this way living becomes intelligent and is brought under conscious and purposive control. There is no situation in human experience comparable with the crisis situation for securing these results.

The crisis provides the situation for discovering and organizing the values of life.—Significantly, the situation that gives rise to reflective thinking is the same as that which makes possible the discovery and organization of the values of life. Our values root deeply in the unconscious "wishes" and yearnings. It is in the situation involving the delayed response that these urges and yearnings are lifted into consciousness so that ends are perceived to have value in the true sense.

Moreover, it is in the conflict of desire with desire, of desire with habit, of habit with habit, or of desire with the mores of the social group that desires are criticized and evaluated and organized into a system of desires or values.

So that it is out of the stressful tensions of life that necessitate meeting, judging, and managing situations involving choice that our deepest and finest appreciations arise. It is in the most intense forms of these appreciations that worship is to be found. The most vital and creative forms of worship are not to be attained by direct approaches through the use of liturgy and symbol. Once such experiences have arisen, they may be recalled and perpetuated through symbols. But the symbols are meaningless without the supporting experience, where persons and groups come into immediate and vital relations with reality.

When now it is remembered that, as the psychologist of religion sees it, religion arises at the point in experience where all our specialized values are united into a total meaning and worth of life in terms of its relation to God, the crisis situation, as the situation within which values

are not only raised into vivid consciousness but are criticized and organized into a consistent system of values, has the utmost contribution to make to religious experience.

4. *The crisis provides the situation for the forming of purposes.*—From what has been suggested, it is clear that the crisis situation, perhaps more than any other situation in human experience, where experience is thrown back upon itself, where choices must be made among alternatives, and where ends are criticized, is the situation in which purposes are formed as the dominant and controlling factors of intelligent living. Here experience is lifted to its most spiritual and creative level.

IV. *Typical Crises in Personal and Social Experience*

Within the limits of this study it is obviously impossible to list all the typical crises which occur in personal and social life. However, a few that are thoroughly representative of our common life will suffice to illustrate the contribution which the crisis experience is capable of making to the enrichment and the furthering of the religious quality of experience. Each individual life and each group will encounter in the course of a rich and meaningful experience many specific crises that emerge out of the concrete setting of that life or group.

Birth.—Birth, as had been suggested, falls within the category of unconscious crises. In the complex network of circumstances, running back through countless generations of hereditary influence, in which the new-born self finds itself enmeshed when it begins the great adventure of life, the individual has no choice, and over these subtle influences he has no control. And yet, perhaps more than any other single factor, the circumstances of one's birth condition his entire career.

The eugenists are right in urging upon the attention of those who assume the responsible rôle of parenthood the right of the child to be well born, sound in bodily and mental equipment to meet the exacting demands which a complex life will make upon him, and to come into possession of the best social inheritance of culture and ideals.

Examples: In no body of literature is the significance of the formative influences of birth more ideally set forth than in the religious literature of the Bible. The religious mind has always associated birth intimately with the spiritual meaning of life, as it has also the fact of death. Birth and death are the fringes that give to life its setting in eternity.

Out of the many discussions of birth in the Bible, four may be selected that serve to illustrate how in the profound religious experience of the race the circumstances of birth have been regarded as determining factors in the whole of life. Study the circumstances that are recorded in the ancient records of the Hebrews regarding the birth of Samuel (I Samuel, chaps. 1 and 2). Study also the circumstances that surrounded the birth of John

the Baptist (Luke 1: 5–24, 57–80), of Jesus (Luke 1:25–56; 2:1–40), and of Timothy (II Timothy 1:5).

2. *The unconscious conditioning of early environment.*—As has been suggested, it is only very recently that we are coming to understand that the entire course of a human life may be determined by events that happen in the early years of childhood, perhaps before the second or third year. Of the significance of these conditioning events the child cannot possibly be conscious, to say nothing of having control over them. This now well recognized fact in the formation of personality lays a grave responsibility upon those who are responsible for the ordering of child life in its earliest years and in the intimate contacts of the home. Unwise criticism, unintelligently administered punishment, unreasonable attitudes of expectancy, may develop within the child attitudes of inferiority that will remain through life. So with the development of fears. So also with the habit of failure.

Examples: An anxious mother consulted Frances E. Wickes about her son who was failing in school and whose work was continually growing worse, though he was a fine, manly-looking, and normal boy. At the time when he was growing more and more confused and baffled about his work, a mental test was given him by an amateur psychologist who was so indiscreet as to give him a written report of his rating, which was very low. The notation on the report read: "Doing as well as he can with his grade of mentality." When his mother received the report she remarked: "When I got that report I knew it was no use. It was true, *he just couldn't succeed.*" The interview with the boy showed that he had accepted himself as an inevitable failure. He was anxious to do everything in his power, but he had no faith that he could succeed. In the presence of his mother, who was overanxious about him, he showed lack of initiative and dependence and showed the behavior of a much younger child. From the evidence Mrs. Wickes quickly concluded that the difficulty was not with the child, but with the mother. Upon investigation, working back through a maze of fears, she discovered that the mother had had a brother who had completely failed to make a proper adaptation to life. She conceived a fear that if she ever had a son he would be a failure like her brother. When her own son was born, consequently, her first remark was: "He is a boy, he will fail." In order to make up for fears, the mother had surrounded him with great anxiety and had unconsciously brought upon him every pressure and assistance, as she believed, toward success. When the mother was brought to face reality in this situation and to see that her fears were the cause of the child's failure, the situation cleared. Mrs. Wickes adds this significant and tragic comment: "I have known many cases where children were forced to bear the sins of their ancestors, not because of inheritance, but because these ghosts were fastened to them by the processes of projection and identification [of the parents]."[1]

A very striking instance of these conditionings of early experience in the Bible is to be found in the influences of Samuel's boyhood experiences with the priest Eli in the temple (I Samuel 2:11–21). Also in the early childhood experiences of Jesus in Nazareth and in

[1] Frances E. Wickes, *The Inner World of Childhood* (New York: Appleton, 1927), pp. 43 ff. In chaps. II and III Mrs. Wickes records many striking instances of unconscious crises arising out of parental difficulties and early associations.

the temple (Luke 2:40–52). Also of the influence of the place of Paul's birth in Tarsus, a university city on the outskirts of the non-Jewish world. One can scarcely doubt the far-reaching influence this had upon his whole future outlook upon the relation of Christianity to the gentile world (Acts 9:11, 30; 11:25; 21:39).

3. *The choice of a vocation.*—Considering the fundamental place that work occupies in the development of personality, the choice of what one will do in life constitutes one of the most crucial decisions one is called upon to make. Rightly considered, the significance of work is vastly more than a way by which one earns a living. It is one of the interests by which men live. Through it one finds expression for his interests and capacities, renders his contribution to society, and in large part realizes himself.

One of the tragedies of life is that this crisis is frequently faced without an adequate appreciation of the factors involved—the needs of society to be served, the specialized interests and capacities of the individual making the choice, the mental, social, and spiritual, as well as the economic compensations, and the effect of work upon personality—or of the consequences that will follow a vocational choice. When the choice of a vocation is lifted from the merely economic level and placed in the larger human and social setting it becomes intensely religious, as involving the will of God.

Examples: Probably American biography affords no more impressive and dramatic illustration of the long and painful search of a young man for his proper life-work than in the case of Jacob A. Riis. Born in the town of Ribe on the northern Danish coast, he landed in New York as a steerage passenger in 1870, without anything with which to start upon his career except a pair of strong hands, an indomitable will, and faith in a free America. Having learned the carpenter's trade, he then tried working in the iron mills in Pennsylvania, at coal-mining, at truck gardening, at making brick, on a railroad gang, as a woodsman, as a hunter and trapper, as a reporter, as an editor, as a canvassing salesman for furniture and flat-irons, besides many other ventures, before, as a reporter on the *Tribune* on the police headquarters assignment on Mulberry Street, New York, he discovered the contacts with national figures that opened up for him the ways that led to one of the most brilliant and useful careers in American life. During this long search for his place in life he was often without money or food, sometimes he slept in the graveyard or in the shelter of the open street. Once he sank to such depths of despondency that he contemplated suicide in East River. Out of these explorations and adventures he not only at last found his life work and made a unique contribution to American life and achievement, but helped his fellows with understanding sympathy to see how the "other half" lives.[1]

It is easy to recover from the gospel memoirs the profound and realistic experience through which Jesus passed in the choice of his life-work. Up until the attainment of mature manhood he had been engaged in the carpenter trade. His decision to leave his

[1] Jacob A. Riis, *The Making of an American*, an autobiography (New York: Macmillan, 1904).

trade, his friends, and the scenes of his early manhood to enter upon the vocation of a religious leader was nothing short of a crisis. The full import of such a decision and the reasons for it must be sought in the social and religious movements that furnished his backgrounds. At the time his decision was made the life of Palestine was profoundly stirred by a national movement of revolt from the domination of Rome. This movement was much more than a political movement; it was at heart profoundly religious. Back of this national crisis lay a long historical process and a growing discontent. It was from this politico-religious background of unrest and national yearning that the preaching of John the Baptizer emerged, and the preaching of John apparently had a profound influence upon the thinking of Jesus. Jesus had responded to that influence, even to being baptized by John. As in the case of the prophets, the entrance of Jesus upon his life work of teaching and preaching was attended by a profound religious experience. This is the meaning of his baptism with its concomitant incidents, and of his temptation. In this respect the beginning of his career of religious leadership was much like that of Amos and of Isaiah (Matt. 3:1–4:11; Mark 1:1–14; Luke 3:1–15. Compare the experience of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry with that of Amos in Amos 1:1 and of Isaiah in Isaiah, chapter 6.[1]

4. *The founding of a family.*—There could be no event of more far-reaching consequences upon the development of personality, and therefore upon religious experience, than the selection of a life-companion and the founding of a family through parenthood. It involves the most intimate and delicate adjustment of persons to persons in the complex relations of the most intimate of all face-to-face groups, the home.

In the normal family there are not only husband and wife, but children. This sets the family in the most significant of human and racial relations. Here not only the biological continuity of the race is accomplished, but the primary continuity of its culture and its spiritual values as well. In its ideal aspects the family is not only a social community in which the worthful experiences of persons are shared, but, when it is religiously conceived, it becomes a little segment of the Kingdom of God.

Examples: Mrs. Alice Freeman Palmer was from many points of view one of the highest embodiments of the qualities of mind, talent, and character of American womanhood. Of her President Tucker said: "There is no other of our generation, with the possible exception of Phillips Brooks, who has stood to such a degree for those qualities in which we must all believe with unquenchable faith if we are to do anything in this world." Brilliant as was her career as president of Wellesley, there was nothing in her life more lovely or attractive than her marriage to Professor Palmer, of Harvard. To this relationship both Miss Freeman and Professor Palmer brought the highest qualities of rich and stimulating personality. Their immensely worthful experiences they shared in the comradeship of their married life before death broke that community of interests and activities—travel, books, work, ideals, purposes. In a little book of poems entitled *A Marriage Cycle*, discovered by her husband after her death, she left an expression of her ideals concerning marriage and of what her own experience of marriage to a noble person had meant to her. In it she

[1] For a very realistic discussion of this experience of Jesus, cf. Shirley Jackson Case, *Jesus: A New Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), especially chapter V, on "Jesus' Choice of a Task."

"endeavored to mark the successive steps through which love brings a pair into union with each other, with nature, and with God. Marriage she had always reverenced, holding that only through it can either man or woman reach the highest fulfilment. When, comparatively late in life, she came to her own, she began in her usual fashion to bring out its inner significance and beauty. Romance was in her case no product of novelty, but was usually fertilized and rendered more exuberant by the deposits of time. Accordingly, when ten years of marriage and her own fortieth year were passed, wonder and gratitude over her happy condition became almost oppressive. From occasional dates scattered through this book of verses I judge she now began to snatch brief intervals from business and employ them for recording typical situations of crisis and growth in our life together."[1] "Alice Freeman thus gave the most striking testimony she could give of her faith in the fundamental social principle that love between man and woman, and the family life which results therefrom, afford for each sex the conditions of its greatest usefulness and honor, and of its supreme happiness."[2]

One of the most idealistic stories of the Old Testament has to do with the forethought, the care, and the religious concern with which Isaac sought out and won Rebekah. The evident reason for its inclusion in the early narratives of Israel is the bearing of the founding of this family upon the development of the Hebrew race. The entire event was carried through in the light of its relation to the highest spiritual values of life (Gen., chap. 24).

5. *Failure.*—Much experience with life reveals the fact that it is full of tragedies. Many of these tragedies have to do with failure, in business or profession, in conduct, in cherished enterprises. Not infrequently such failures lead to disillusionment, discouragement, and despair. If, on the other hand, their deeper meaning is seized upon, they may lead to a reorientation of one's entire life, to the discovery of new resources of character and purpose, to achievement upon a higher and more spiritual level.

Examples: Few persons have left a deeper or more lasting spiritual impression upon their generation than Phillips Brooks. So also few lives record more bitterness of failure and more triumphant rising above initial defeat to complete and satisfying success. Upon his graduation from Harvard, Phillips Brooks entered upon his chosen profession of teaching, in the Boston Latin School. No sooner had he entered upon his duties than his work as a teacher was judged to be a complete failure by his superiors in charge of the school. This experience was an unexpected and staggering blow to him. "Phillips Brooks—humiliated, discouraged, utterly broken down, indeed, by his complete failure at the threshold of life, not seeing well or at all in what direction to turn or to apply his hand—went despondently to some man in his family acquaintance of assured success, and in the depth of his disappointment and mortification asked him for advice: could he suggest any way in which it would be possible for him, the recent graduate and the future great preacher, to earn a living!"[3] It was during this period of intense struggle that he came into an inward religious

[1] *The Life of Alice Freeman Palmer*, by her husband, George Herbert Palmer (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1908), p. 12.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 177, 178.

[3] Alexander V. G. Allen, *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks*, I, 105. 3 vols. (New York: Dutton, 1901).

experience which amounted to conversion. Upon the advice of President Walker, of Harvard, he turned his face toward the ministry, and it would be gratuitous to record his phenomenal success as a preacher of all time.

There is perhaps nowhere to be found a literature that records a deeper or more intense religious experience than the Psalms. Significantly enough, many of the psalms arose out of the most intense crises involving failure or inadequacy in personal or social experience. It is characteristic of these psalms that they begin by describing conditions of desperate involvement and the expression of a sense of utter inadequacy or defeat. In such a situation the individual soul or the group, thrown back upon itself, makes a new discovery of God and of the spiritual resources of life. The soul having risen from these depths of defeat and despair, these psalms characteristically end with an ecstasy of peace and joy that can alone come from new levels of spiritual insight and the discovery of resources of power not of one's self. Study Psalms 3, 6, 7, 10, 22, 28, 31, 40, 42, 46, 57, 91. Psalm 51, because it sprang up out of the bitter depths of moral collapse, has become the world's confessional for all who fail in moral ideals. The autobiographical material in the writings of Paul affords some of the most striking expressions of this discovery of new resources of spiritual power through struggle with baffling situations that exceed one's strength. Study Rom. 7:7–8:39; Phil. 4:13; II Cor. 3:4–6; 12:10.

There are those who believe that Jesus' experience on the cross was viewed by him as the complete obscuration of his sense of the presence of God and of the complete failure of his life-work. From this point of view it seemed to him as though his followers had not only forsaken him in utter collapse of confidence, but that even God had turned against him, leaving him utterly alone at the end of a mistaken career. Study John 6:66–71; Matt. 26:36–46; 27:45; Mark 14:32–42; 15:33, 34.

6. *Accidents and disease.*—In our precarious world it not infrequently happens that persons otherwise well adapted to life are overtaken by unexpected accident or disease. Different persons react in different ways to these crises. As in the case of failure, some are depressed or embittered. Others discover through these experiences new meanings in life and new sources of beauty and power.

Examples: At the age of nineteen months Helen Keller was deprived of both sight and hearing, probably the greatest combination of misfortunes that could overtake a human life otherwise normal. The effect of this tragedy, however, was to develop through processes of skilful education the remaining powers which she possessed to their highest possible degree. The results are too well known to require comment. Miss Keller developed marvelous insights into the meaning of life, rare qualities of personal character, and a wide range of knowledge and human contacts denied to all except the most fortunate persons. Her life has been an inspiration to countless numbers who essay the adventure of life.[1]

Few men have contributed as much to the enrichment of the spiritual life of our generation as George Matheson. Born of gifted parents and surrounded with the stimulating atmosphere of culture, he faced the prospects of a most successful career. But at the age of twenty, upon graduation from the University of Glascow, he was overtaken by a calamity that would have daunted, if not defeated, many a stout spirit. He became practically blind. But his calamity only stirred him to the extraordinary use of his remaining powers, with the result that he gained depths of spiritual insight that otherwise might never have been possible to him. It was as though God had taken away his sight that he

[1] Hellen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1915).

might see. It was out of the depth and richness of his religious experience that we have that hymn upon which so many souls have drawn for help, "O Love that Will Not Let Me Go."[1]

7. *Disappointment and bereavement.*—One of the most characteristic crises in personal life is the disappointment and overwhelming sorrow that come from the loss of those whom we love and with whom our own lives are knit. Who has not seen sorrow turn to bitterness under such circumstances, or to defeat, or to the utter collapse of morale? But great souls make of these crises the occasion for seeing the meaning of life in a new setting and for the discovery of new incentives to serve society.

Examples: Few have brought pleasure to more people on many continents than Sir Harry Lauder. He had but one son, on whom he lavished an unusual affection and upon whom he built high hopes, as fathers do who will live on in their sons. He had bought a country estate and was building a home for his son and his bride-to-be when the dark war cloud settled upon the world. The son was called from Australia to the colors, Sir Harry following him to England. And then happened to him what happened to thousands of fathers and mothers during that world-tragedy. Sir Harry was playing in "Three Cheers" at the Shaftesbury Theater, London. Every day he scanned the official lists of war casualties in the press, with the dread which countless fathers and mothers know so well. His song, "The Laddies Who Fought and Won," was a great hit, sending his audiences into hysterical enthusiasm. He put his whole soul into it, for it was of John and the 51st Regiment that he was always thinking. On the morning of New Year's Day, 1917, it came, the message he had dreaded with his whole soul, an official telegram which read: "Captain John Lauder killed in action. Official. War Office." Of his meeting with his wife the next morning he says: "The meeting between Nance and myself next morning I shall never forget. She was wonderful. Through her tears her eyes shone with a brave light. She was proud of John in death as she had been of him in life. I was the weak individual that morning; she, the strong. And after we had prayed a little together, not questioning His mysterious ways but simply asking Him for strength and comfort, we both felt slightly more resigned to our terrible loss. Had it not been for Nance and her mothering of me at that time, I think my professional career would have ended with John's death. . . . . The last words that my boy uttered were 'Carry on!' I resolved that I also would carry on." And when on the following Thursday night Sir Harry took his part on the stage of Shaftesbury Theater, there was a new depth, a new meaning, a new understanding, though after leading the singing of "God Save the King" he fainted. Then he enlisted and served by lightening the burdens of the boys in the trenches by singing to them.[2]

Within the limits of space, this last crisis—that of the catastrophe of the World War—which broke up so many habits, challenged so many traditions, subjected to criticism so many values, must suffice for those lesser crises in social experience that serve as pivots upon which group experience turns and from which often emerge new appreciations and new attitudes toward life.

[1] Biographical sketch by D. MacMillan in *Times of Retirement*, by George Matheson (New York: Revell, 1901).

[2] Read Sir Harry Lauder, "Roamin' in the Gloamin'," *Saturday Evening Post*, February 11, 1928.

V. *Salvation through Crisis*

1. *The Problem of the Crisis*

A crisis is dangerous. It will make us or break us. Like a wave we must ride it to victory or be whelmed beneath its flood. One becomes suddenly ill in the midst of an important undertaking. It is a crisis. Out of such illness some men have risen to a great career; others have been dragged down to ruin. The son who has been carefully reared is discovered to have stolen money. It is a turning-point in the life of the family, leading to greater mutual understanding and co-operation, if rightly met, or leading to deeper disaster if wrongly treated. The investment which was to pay for the education of the children vanishes in the bankruptcy of a firm. It calls for a reorganization of life purposes and transformation of habits whereby powers and possibilities are brought to light that might have remained forever hidden; or else the family sinks and sinks. Someone dies under whose love and shelter we have lived. How shall we meet the crisis?

Crisis generally wears the face of disaster. But it is not disaster; it is opportunity, if we make it so. But it rests with us and the way we avail ourselves of God. It is the fateful moment when we must change our ways for good or ill. It is the turning-point whence paths diverge. It is the situation in which old habits no longer suffice to produce desired results. Either they produce no noticeable results at all, or very unexpected and undesired ones.

The chief thing to note about a crisis, from the standpoint of this section, is the fact that it requires a reorganization of our habits. Therein lies its peril and its promise. Our old ways of life are disrupted. We must seek out new ways. How shall we do it? The practical problem, which we always try to formulate and solve in this section, is expressed in this last question. When old habits no longer work and we are forced to seek new ways, how shall we conduct ourselves in order to find the way of salvation and escape the way of ruin? How to meet a crisis. That is our problem.

2. *How Not to Meet a Crisis*

There are three wrong ways to meet a crisis. One is to fail to see it. The second is to see it and fear. The third is to be so custom bound and muscle ridden that we cannot change our ways and meet the strange new demands that are made upon us. Let us consider each of these in turn.

Often crises come and go, the backwash sweeping men off their feet, and the men never discover there is a crisis until they find themselves

struggling in the wreckage and it is too late. They are so busy doing the little thing that is directly at hand. They do not take time, as every man occasionally should, to draw apart from the continuous succession of one little thing after another, and look deeply into the events of life, and fare abroad, and so be in a state of mind to catch the significance of a crisis when it begins to loom. They do not mount the watch tower of worship. It is easy to become so engrossed in the daily grind that we cannot see the crisis in its beginning. Again, some people are so blindly optimistic that they refuse to see anything which does not sustain them in what they happen at the time to want to do. Blindness to the fact of crisis is probably the most common fault and the most common reason why men are hurt instead of helped by critical situations when they arise. They simply do not see the need of reorganizing their lives and readjusting their habits. They are not alert; they are not sensitive to those changes which betoken the oncoming of a crisis. They may note the signs that indicate a change of weather, as Jesus said, but they do not observe the signs of the times. While Noah builds the ark they laugh him to scorn. So the flood comes and finds them unready.

The second wrong way to meet a crisis is in fear. Sometimes, strange though it may seem, fear is joined with blindness. If we are afraid the easiest way is to hide the head in the sand and ignore what is going on. Sometimes it is something else than the crisis which causes us to hide our eyes in fear and so remain in ignorance of the critical nature of the situation. Again, it may be some sign of the crisis which makes us shut our eyes to any further developments of it.

But this is not always the way fear affects men. It does not always make them shut their eyes to danger. But it has other effects just as harmful or worse. It is never the right way to meet a crisis. While it does not always blind, it probably always distorts the vision and prevents us from seeing things precisely as they are; and crisis is a time when, above all others, we must see things as they are. Fear confuses the mind and renders our thinking inaccurate; but crisis is a time when we must think profoundly, comprehensively, accurately, and swiftly. Fear disorganizes the will and prevents us from reaching a final conclusion and taking definite action. It is likely to throw us back into all sorts of wasteful and vacillating and futile practices just when we need most of all to conserve all our time and strength and resources. Next to blindness, fear is the worst thing that can befall us when we face a crisis. Possibly it is worse than blindness, at times.

But when we say that fear is the worst way to meet a crisis we must note a distinction. A crisis ought to stimulate us. It probably always

does when we face it and recognize it for what it is. This state of stimulation might be called a state of fear; that is, it is a state in which our latent powers are aroused, the action of heart and lungs quickened, the blood courses more rapidly through all the arteries, the total rate of metabolism is accelerated. But there is a vast difference between that state of stimulation in which we are given most complete command over all our powers and that state in which there is the stimulation of fear, but a stimulation that confuses and disorganizes the personality. It is this last which we condemn as the worst way to meet a crisis.

The third wrong way to meet a crisis is by persisting in old ways, refusing to modify and reorganize our habits, and, if need be, our total way of life. This may be due to stubbornness or conceit; it may be due to lack of plasticity in our habits, we being physically and mentally muscle bound and rigid; or it may be merely due to lack of imagination. But crisis requires change on our part, oftimes swift and radical change. Except ye turn and become as a little child ye have not the plasticity required to enter the Kingdom of Heaven by way of a crisis.

3. *The Right Way*

Knowledge of the three wrong ways to meet a crisis helps us to see what is the right way. Rightly to meet a crisis and ride it to victory we must be alert, fearless, and plastic. These three requirements should be stated a little more fully.

To be alert is to be sensitive to changing conditions, keenly aware of the dangers involved as well as of the other possibilities. Can we be sensitive to danger and possibilities of various kinds, surveying the situation in its fulness, face it squarely, feel the full stimulus of it, and yet be free of that fear that distorts the vision, confuses the thinking, and weakens the will? That is the test. These two things must be united if we are to master the crisis. We must face the issue squarely and unafraid.

Then we must be capable of changing our ways. The right thing to do in a crisis always requires some marked change in our manner of living; otherwise it would not be a crisis. Sometimes such a change requires great sacrifice. Also the good to be gained by means of the sacrifice may be problematical, depending on a venture which is by no means certain of its outcome. Furthermore this good to be gained, while it may be beneficial to others, may not be acceptable to us as a good except as we so change our interests and ways of life as to share in the good of these others. Thus the crisis, demanding sacrifice by us, cannot be met

without great capacity for transformation in our total personality and way of life.

To meet a crisis adequately, then, we must have clear vision with alertness and sensitivity; we must be fearless; and must have capacity for transforming the organization of our lives. The problem we have to solve is to discover how these three traits of personality can be acquired; for it is only by means of these that we can meet a crisis in the right way.

4. *How to Achieve the Right Way*

The way to be alert we have already suggested. It consists in drawing aside from the daily grind at regular intervals in order to survey in thought the total situation in which we live our lives. We must mount the watch tower and look around, figuratively speaking. To do this effectively we must relax and wait in quietness in some solitary place so that there can rise up into our mind any hidden thing which we have been experiencing but not noticing. For there are many things which enter the fringe of consciousness unnoticed, and sometimes these unnoticed bits of experience have tremendous significance for us and others. But we will never come to know them and their significance unless we take these times of quiet worshipful waiting in which they have opportunity to rise into the focus of consciousness. Words and attitudes and expressions of the face in our associates have been saying something to us but we could not understand their meaning until the relaxation of these quiet minutes allows these experiences to enter our mind with their load of meaning. That is the reason we call this method of retirement a way of mounting the watch tower. It is a way of being alert and of cultivating alertness. If there is a crisis looming up before us, we will discover it quicker this way than in any other. If a crisis is already upon us and we have failed to note it, we will see it when we mount the watch tower.

But how can we rid ourselves of that demoralizing kind of fear which we described previously? This is one of the most important and most difficult things. Yet there is a sure way of overcoming fear. You cannot necessarily keep it from falling upon you; but when it comes you can find a cure that never fails if you learn the method of it. You can recover your self-command, restore your nerve, and regain clarity of vision. Fear will occasionally fall upon some of us inevitably, with all its demoralization, but the important thing is to know a method by which to escape from its clutches. We shall try to describe that method.

Stated very simply, the cure of fear is the practice of the presence of God. But that statement is hardly full enough to mean much to one who has never used the method.

One is free of demoralizing fear just as soon as he is ready to accept the facts precisely as they are. Fear of the demoralizing sort is the endeavor to make things seem to be different from what they truly are. It is shrinking, cowering, hiding, in spirit if not in body. That means trying to hide the facts out of sight and make them seem different. As long as one clings to the hope that things may be better than they seem he is subject to fear. There is record of a man who found he was going blind. As long as he clung to his failing eyesight he was fearful and depressed. But when at last he saw there was no hope, resigned himself to inevitable fact, and set to work to cultivate his sense of touch in order to become an expert flour-tester, his fear departed. The man who cannot face the likelihood of defeat and failure, but must keep these out of mind in order to sustain his courage, is still a coward. Cyrano de Bergerac said: "I have never fought with hope to win," meaning that his courage did not depend upon the hope to win. As soon as one is ready to accept the facts and commit himself completely to the course they indicate, surrendering himself to the keeping of reality, he can lift his head unafraid, alert and ready to make every possible use of circumstance, but never shrinking from reality, however grim it may appear.

Now this state of complete self-committal, this total self-surrender to reality, with consequent command over all the resources of personality, is possible when one fills his mind with the thought that underneath all other facts is the basic fact upon which all else depends. This basic fact can be called the structure of the universe or it can be called God. Whenever we commit ourselves in love to God, accepting him with affection and all things else for his sake, we are free of fear. This state of mind requires cultivation. We do not have it by nature, or, if we do, the conditions of civilization amid which we live have taken it from us. This state of mind must be cultivated in seasons of worship. The cultivation of this state of mind in which we feel ourselves sustained and moved by the basic fact of the world is what we mean by the practice of the presence of God. It casts out fear.

If in time of crisis one feels that he is losing his nerve, and the disorganizing chill of fear creeps over him, let him retire for a little time and be alone where he can recover this state of complete self-committal to reality for the love of God. If he has never practiced the presence of God in the manner described, he may not be able to do this. But if he has practiced it, he can in every time of need recover his poise. And becoming a master of himself, he can master circumstance. He can even master death in the sense of facing it fearlessly and making it yield up whatsoever profit it can be made to yield to himself and his fellow-men. Many

a godly man, and pre-eminently Jesus, has been able to make his own death serve him well for centuries after he was gone. We remember Latimer calling across to Ridley when the two were being burned to death for their religious faith: "Be of good cheer, Brother Ridley, for we shall this day by the grace of God light such a candle as shall never be put out." They did. Latimer turned that crisis to good account. He met it right.

The third requirement for meeting a crisis, we said, was plasticity. This is something which cannot be achieved at the last moment in the hour of need. It must be cultivated and preserved from childhood. If one has lost it he may be able to win it back by a long slow process; but it is far better to keep it.

How can one preserve plasticity? By putting himself in the situation where he can feel awe and wonder and reverence; for awe and wonder and reverence are states of consciousness which indicate that one is reacting to something very different from the common matters of routine habit. Awe and wonder and reverence are the exact opposites of rigid routine. They constitute that precious childlike attitude which Jesus said was prerequisite to entering the Kingdom of Heaven. The reason they are prerequisite is very plain. It is because they represent in a man that plasticity which enables him to undergo transformation. Each man must seek out for himself those conditions which arouse in him the attitude of wonder, awe, and reverence. For it is these that represent in him that plasticity without which he cannot find the gateway into the Kingdom of Heaven which is opened before him by a crisis.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Define "personality" as an achievement.
2. Describe a "religious personality."
3. What is an "unconscious crisis"? What a "conscious crisis"?
4. State the four ways in which a crisis offers opportunity for reconstruction in life.
5. What program of reflective thinking leading to reconstruction does our author give?
6. Can you recall any period in your own experience when such reconstruction took place?
7. Does that experience verify the program of Question 5?
8. Give an example from your own observation in which circumstances of birth and early environment were conditioning causes in shaping character.
9. What is the significance of a person's vocation in relation to his life and religion?
10. What opportunities does the life of the family offer for the spiritualization of crises experiences within the family?
11. How may failures become steps in character achievement?
12. Give from your own observation an example of right adjustment to failure.
13. Give from your own experience an example of accident or disease as affording the crisis opportunity which resulted in strengthening character?

14. Handle disappointment or bereavement in the same way.
15. Analyze the problem of the crisis.
16. What three wrong ways of meeting a crisis does the author suggest?
17. What does he consider the elements in the right way to meet a crisis?
18. How may one overcome the demoralizing fear of an approaching crisis?
19. What does the author mean by the "practice of the presence of God"?
20. How can one preserve plasticity?
21. Name several cases in your own experience or your observation which illustrate any point in this study.

Study VIII[1]

Religious Experience through the Church

I. *Religion a Social Experience*

Since religion is more than a philosophy, it naturally involves social relations. An attempt to live in helpful relation with the personality-producing forces of the universe is both the result and the motive for relations with human personality. Nor is this all. Our relations with one another take on permanent forms in customs and institutions. Social life is not something in the abstract, but abounds in all sorts of behavior. There is a way of indicating and enjoying friendship. We converse with each other, shake hands, eat together, walk together, sing together—in fact, there are few even of the minutiae of the individual's life that are not more or less determined for him by the social group to which he belongs. Without this common life, personality would be far less developed. There would be, of course, individuals, because nature seems determined upon producing them, but personal qualities are born only in social relations. Indeed, one might almost say that a person is an individual in normal social relations.

But no social philosophy preceded social action. Human society is vastly older than sociology. Similarly, in the case of our religious life, actual religious practices long preceded religious philosophy or religious literature; indeed, in primitive society religion and customs were at points identical. Uncultured primitive men and women yielded to their urge to make friendly and get help from those mysterious forces or beings upon which they felt themselves dependent. The most natural way was to make these supernatural entities, however conceived, members of the tribe or nation. The tribe or nation then preserved the proper ways of continuing this fellowship.

II. *The Group in Primitive Religious Experience*

With the exception of certain persons like the medicine men and magic workers, the earliest approach to this religious fellowship was through tribal custom. As soon as the youth became mature he was initiated into the knowledge of those mysteries which brought the tribe

[1] Professors Shailer Mathews and Henry N. Wieman have co-operated in the preparation of this study (see Table of Contents).

supernatural assistance. These initiations were something more than trials of the initiate's courage and endurance. Whatever form they took, they all served to make the young men, and sometimes young women, participants in the tribal secrets. They not only became members of the tribe in full standing, but the secret knowledge, the mysterious practices, the fellowship with superhuman forces which were a part of the tribal heritage were now enjoyed by the new members. Whatever theory one may have as to the first stages of religious self-expression, it is clear that there was no religion without the social group. The approach of the individual to his gods was through the membership in his family and tribe. Not only was it his duty to maintain tribal customs which were a part of religion as a sacred and unique possession, but he could also hope that because of this loyalty to his social heritage and his participation in the total life of the tribe he would gain power from superhuman forces. To attempt to get this aid outside of his group would have been to incur severe punishment, not only from his tribe or family, but also from the superhuman beings. There was a proper way in which to approach them; there were proper presents to be given them; there were proper rites with which to honor them; and all these were a part of the social heritage into the enjoyment of which the initiate entered.

III. *Religious Experience through the National Bond*

This identification of the nation with the religious group, or, if we may use the term in a loose sense, the church, is plainly to be seen in the history of the Hebrews. With the exception of a few great prophetic souls, the Hebrews believed that the individual came to Jehovah through membership in a chosen people. Jehovah was the father of the nation. He gave it laws, religious, civil, and criminal. He was to be addressed as a savior. But just as the relations of a general with the privates is through the army and its organization, so the individual Hebrew came into fellowship with his God through his social groupings.

In early days, before there was tribal organization, the family was the group through which the individual reached his God. But when the Hebrews came into Palestine a rudimentary organization had already been set up and a rudimentary priesthood established. Thereafter the representatives of the growing nation sought to control the means of access to God. The sacred places were discredited and the worship of Jehovah was localized in various places until finally it was established in the temple at Jerusalem. Religion became increasingly a matter of technique, which in turn became a part of the social life. The miscellaneous offering of sacrifices were forbidden, and men shared in religion

by sharing in the nation's life and performing religious tasks set by the religious society which was growing up under the leadership of those who ministered at the temple.

The fact that in our later day we have abandoned most of the religious practices of the Hebrews should not blind us to the religious significance to the individual of those feasts and ceremonies which constituted so large a part of the Hebrew religion. The Hebrews not only believed that in some special way their God, Jehovah, lived at Jerusalem, but they also believed that in some special way they could come to him through offering him food of various sorts, singing his praises, and uttering petitions. All of these practices, which obviously came from social life, were given formal organization in the religious practices of the nation's church. How precious they were and how conducive to religious emotion can be seen from the Psalms.

> We have pondered upon thy grace, O God
> In the midst of thy temple (Ps. 48:9).

Read also prayers for victory (Ps. 20), for relief (Ps. 40), for vengeance (Ps. 41), for forgiveness (Ps. 51), in which petitions and praise go hand in hand. Also Ps. 66:13–20, Ps. 84, and the triumphant praises of Pss. 96–100; 105–50, noting that these profound religious experiences are linked up continually with presence in or thought of the sanctuary, the dwelling-place of God and the place of meeting between Jehovah and his people. Ps. 42:1–5; 43:1–5.

Make a study of the Psalms with the purpose of discovering all of the varied experiences which gave to the devout Hebrew a sense of communion with God, noting their relation to religion as a group experience, centering about the Temple.

It is apparent from the pages of the Old Testament that the individual among the Hebrew people found his religious life, like his national life, inextricably associated with his nation. To be exiled to a foreign country was not only bitter in itself, but more unendurable because of the loss of opportunities to go to the temple with the multitude keeping holy day (Ps. 137).

There were dangers connected with this highly centralized national ecclesiasticism. They were seen by all the great prophets. The inevitable struggle between highly organized religious practices and ethics is notorious. On the one side are those who overstress the importance of ritual as a means of maintaining friendly relations with God, and on the other side are those who often belittle such ritual assistance to religious experience and emphasize the ethical aspects of life. Of the two, the

latter attitude has the larger social significance, but it would be a mistake utterly to ignore the other. Yet when ritualistic religion comes to be an end in itself it is likely to produce sad hypocrisy. It is this against which Jeremiah called out, Amos rebuked, and Isaiah denounced. Read Jer. 7:1–15; Amos 5:21–24; Isa. 1:12–17. So, too, Micah, in the great saying which has become the epitome of the religion of the prophets, "Yet what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

The prophets did not undertake to separate the individual from the religious institutions. Neither Jeremiah nor Ezekiel is a thoroughgoing nonconformist. The ministrations of the temple were too precious to be utterly abandoned, nor was there in their mind any necessary contradiction between properly conducted sacrifice and ethical activity.

IV. *Religious Experience through Social Grouping according to Jesus*

Jesus clearly did not undertake to set up a new religion. He was interested in the attitudes of individuals rather than in the organization of worship. All his immediate followers were Jews who maintained their membership in the religious institutions of their nation and continued to use the temple and the synagogue in their worship. Yet Jesus was not indifferent to the importance of religious associations. He was the originator of a movement which, while without any general organization, did include such loose associations as those of the twelve and of the seventy, Mark 3:13; 6:7–13; Luke 10:1–20. Jesus' purpose in selecting the twelve is expressly stated as involving the purpose of intimacy and education. The twelve maintained a community life, apparently having a common fund upon which to live. At the Last Supper they were assembled together as a sort of family, and this community of life was to be maintained. They were to sup together in memory of that supper and were assured that they would feel the presence of their Lord, and they could believe that where two or three were gathered together in his name there he was also, Matt. 18:19, 20.

But, as has already been said, this "fellowship" was apparently not intended for more than education and propaganda. We have no evidence that it became the basis of common religious practices, although the disciples did ask Jesus to teach them how to pray, and the Lord's prayer was doubtless first said by those who heard it from the lips of Jesus. It would be a serious mistake to think of this movement instituted by Jesus as not being fundamentally religious. He was not engaged in reforming the world, but in endeavoring to show men the sort of life which they

should pursue in preparation for the coming Kingdom of God. And this life was centered upon the belief that God was fatherly. It was because of his love that men could believe that love in human affairs was stronger than hatred, that the proper preparation for the glorious age which might any day dawn was not in the coercion of men into righteousness nor in the minute observance of law because of fear of consequences. The training of the Christian community from the start was a training in trust in the heavenly father. The faith of which Jesus speaks is the opposite of fear rather than of intellectual doubt.

V. *Religious Experience through the Early Church*

This spirit of the community founded by Jesus remained true of the Christian movement so long as its members were exclusively Jews. The picture of the Jerusalem church is that of a body of enthusiasts who cooperated not only in caring for their poor but also in their spiritual experiences. From its very beginning the Christian community is seen in meetings. They gather together for prayers, for the teaching of the apostles, for common meals. It was at one of these meetings that the experience of Pentecost occurred, Acts 2:1. In fact, while Jesus emphasized the importance of the individual and his immediate trust in God as father, his followers inevitably drew toward each other to share in the warmth of each other's faith and experience. It is true that in its primitive stages the Christian movement did not have independent religious organization. The Jewish Christians continued to keep the law of Moses and to worship at the temple, but they had their own meetings for their particular ends, and there they seem to have reached decisions as to general policy as well as listened to the reports of the progress of the Christian community. Read Acts 15 and Gal. 2. Wherever the Christians appear, without exception they are seen to be members of some group, of family or of friends, who find in their meeting the contagion of enthusiasm and the development of their faith.

VI. *Religious Experience in the Church of the Non-Jewish World*

It was when the Christian community came to include in large measure or exclusively those who were not Jews that this tendency toward religious association, latent in the first stages of the movement, came fully into expression. It was of course inevitable that questions of worship and of religious procedure should arise when those who were Christians were also not Jews. On the one side there was the possibility,

and indeed the demand, on the part of the Jerusalem Christians that these new followers of the Master should become thorough proselytes. On the other side there was the impossibility that they could maintain the religious practices of paganism. Caught between the unwillingness to become Jews and the unwillingness to remain worshipers of the pagan gods, the little Christian communities began to organize themselves for religious purposes. It is not difficult to trace this and to see how important this new social relation was to become.

We have pictures of this from contemporaries. Perhaps as interesting as any is that picture of the common life of the Christians implied in Paul's letters to the Corinthians. Read I Cor. 14:10–37. We can see them eating together and drinking together. We can see them then having some sort of service involving singing and speaking, prophesying and exhortation, or the exercise of some gift like that of speaking in tongues. It must have been a very unconventional assembly, and so far as we have any indication there was no ritual involving sacrifice. Neither was there any priesthood, as in the case of all the other existing religions. In fact, it was this which gave this Christian movement such significance. It was a nation of priests rather than a nation gathered round a family of priests. And they were to settle their own disputes rather than to appear before local courts.

Within this little group there seems to have been spiritual experience. The Holy Spirit came upon them to order the direction of their activities. The participation in the Last Supper seemed to them to have had supernatural effect when eaten unworthily, I Cor. 11:28–32. The prayers that were uttered by some later invoked the amen from the assembled group, I Cor. 14:16. Nor was this all. Within this little group of Christians, some slaves, some poor, and a few well-to-do, there was being developed a conception of human relation and a practice of the spirit of love. On this the letters addressed to the various churches by Paul and others laid special emphasis. Clearly enough, these households of faith had social ideals which would be possible only within groups that preserved the teaching of Jesus. Read II Cor. 6:1–10; 8:1–15; Eph. 4:17–32; 5:15—6:9.

Thus, within the church of the New Testament period we see set up a social institution which had the three great characteristics which the Christian churches have maintained to the present day. First, they helped the individual into fellowship with God through their sacraments, their worship, and their instruction; second, they helped the individual to develop the attitudes of Jesus; third, they furnished the individual with a group within which a common devotion to such ideals made it

possible to work out moral practices which would otherwise have been difficult if not impossible. This threefold service to the individual grows more distinct as the Christian movement itself develops.

VII. *Religious Experience through the Church of the Middle Ages*

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the church during those centuries in which Western civilization was reconstituting itself after the incoming of the German tribes. Social institutions had largely disappeared with the Roman Empire, and violence had replaced order. Civilization had to be built up literally from the very ground. In the midst of this process the church was the representative of Europe's classical heritage. It not only gave opportunity for worship, but it conserved what little there was of literature and culture. Over against the violence of a military, land-owning class it set forth the attractions of a life of peace, agriculture, and prayer. Within it official promotion was open to those who were not of the feudal class. Although we may well deplore the effects upon European civilization of the celibacy of the more spiritual-minded men and women, the monasteries and convents furnished the refuge for many a person who otherwise would have been at the mercy of a social order too prone to violence. One has only to recall the great ecclesiastical buildings of Europe to see how large a part organized Christian worship had in the life of the Middle Ages. Cathedrals and churches, monastic institutions and hospitals are the bequest of those turbulent formative years during which a new civilization was being organized. By their very shape and decorations they helped the worshipers to think of God and his presence.

Although occasionally some highly individualistic person might find independent spiritual satisfaction, religion was all but impossible outside the church. Sooner or later such persons would be absorbed into the church as holy persons, and even in the case of extreme ascetics, the ideals by which they were controlled came from Christian institutions. The purpose of the church was to bring every individual into the most intimate relationship with God. To this end its entire activity was directed. Primarily the church did not exist for the purpose of controlling social affairs, but for that of saving individuals from hell. Back of all its activities was the belief that since the days of Adam all men had been born not only sinful but doomed to endless torture as punishment for the original sin. God in his love had determined to save some of these, and had intrusted the ministration of his grace exclusively to the church. Outside its portals there could be no salvation. With this purpose of

bringing God to humanity the church raised the most elemental things of life to be channels of grace, that is, as sacraments.

In the case of baptism, original sin was removed and life was regenerated, though still subject to sin and discipline both before and after death. Since marriage was made a sacrament, the church affected directly the family life. It not only determined the legitimacy of children, but it made marriage an outward sign of an inward grace, that is to say, a new method of the soul's approach to God.

In celebrating the Lord's Supper the priest was believed to work a veritable miracle, so that the substance of the wine became transformed into the substance of the blood of Christ, and the substance of the bread became changed into the substance of the flesh of Christ. The fact that no change occurred in the appearance of either was only accidental. The church increasingly emphasized the necessity of accepting its statement that this transubstantiation had taken place. The immediate effect of this was to make a person feel that when he took the elements into his mouth he actually partook of the blood and flesh of Christ.

The church was continually bringing home to the individual the fact that God was angry with sinners and that every person ought constantly to seek the divine forgiveness. To this end Christ had established the church and given authority to the clergy to pronounce upon people who were penitent the absolution of sins, and at the same time to prescribe for them, after they had confessed their wrongdoing, such a course of conduct as would serve not only to indicate the sincerity of their repentance, but also in a way serve as a response on their part to the demands of a righteous God.

Dealing with a world that could neither read nor write, the service of the church became more dramatic and appealing to the eye and ear. Pictures and statues were the texts and scriptures of the laity. The cathedrals and parish churches were impressive and beautiful; the order of service was enriched with music; holy days released men from labor; and the presence of priests and monks continually reminded men and women of the necessity of approach to God and of their subjection to constant oversight by God.

We must leave to those who care to debate the subject the question as to whether or not this sort of religion was calculated to develop the finer ethical aspects of life. The simple fact is that in and through the church men had the experience of God. In prayer before some altar, in the privacy of the confessional, in the participation in the mass, as well as in many another way, men were brought more or less intelligently into a sense of the divine presence.

Though undoubtedly, because of lack of education, superstition lay waiting at the door of religion, religious experience and faith were sincere and in some cases exceedingly beautiful. We have, for example, the meditation of a man, Thomas á Kempis, who devoted himself to the church and who formulated perhaps as well as any man the effect of the Catholic religion upon a susceptible and earnest soul. Note what he says about the Communion:

Many run to sundry places to behold the relics of saints, and wonder when they hear their wonderful works; they look at the large churches built for them, and kiss their bones, which are wrapped in silk and gold.

And behold Thou art here present with me, O my God, Holy One of holy ones, Creator of men, Lord of angels.

Often men are moved only by the curiosity and novelty of the sight of these things, and but little fruit of amendment is found thereby, especially when persons without due contrition run hither and thither.

But here, in this Sacrament, Thou art present, my God, the Man Christ Jesus; here also is abundant fruit of salvation plentifully reaped, so often as Thou art worthily and devoutly received.

To this indeed we are not drawn by any levity, curiosity, or sensuality; but by a Faith which is firm, a Hope which is devout, a Charity which is sincere. . . . .

O wonderful condescension of Thy loving-kindness towards us, that Thou, O Lord God, Who hast formed and breathed life into all spirits, deignest to come to the wretched soul and to quench its thirst with all Thy divinity and humanity! O happy mind, O blessed soul, that can receive Thee, its Lord and its God, with all devotion, and be filled with spiritual joy in the reception of Thee! . . . .

I must be content to live in the light of true faith, and in it to walk, "until the day break," the day of eternal glory, "and the shadows flee away," the shadows of figures. "But when that which is perfect is come," the use of sacraments shall cease, for the blessed shall have no need of the medicine of the sacrament in the glory of heaven; for they rejoice without end in the presence of God, beholding His glory face to face, and being transformed from their glory to the glory of the depths of the Deity, they taste the word of God, become flesh, as it was from the beginning and will be to all eternity.[1]

The great proportion of those who contributed to the progress of human welfare during the Middle Ages were members of the clergy. The same is almost equally true of statesmen. The church was far, indeed, from being a mere tyrant of the human intellect. On the contrary, it founded universities, patronized art, partially controlled the knight's lust for fighting; even undertook, though not always wisely, to give moral direction to business. But all this was really incidental to its primary

[1] *De Imitatione Christi*, Book IV.

purpose. However worldly certain great clerics may have become, the church as an institution was opening up ways of bringing man to God and God to man. Many of the great men of affairs, like Bernard of Clairvaux, were mystics seeking by the discipline and the routine of some religious order an immediate access to the divine presence. Their hostility to evil and what to them was heresy was something more than that of bigots. They sought to maintain the church as the means of grace for the human soul.

The following story told by Suso, a sick German monk of this period, after meeting with a robber in a wood, serves as an illustration:

> After revealing to me crimes that made my blood run cold, he went on to say, "I was once in this forest, just about this hour of the day, on the lookout for booty as I was this evening, when I met a priest, to whom I confessed myself. He was standing just where you are now, and when my shrift was ended, I drew out this knife, stabbed him to the heart, and rolled his body down there into the Rhine." When I heard this, the cold sweat burst out upon my face; I staggered back giddy, almost senseless, against the tree. Seeing this, the woman ran up, and caught me in her arms, saying, "Good sir, fear nothing, he will not kill *you*." Whereat the murderer said, "I have heard much good of you, and that shall save your life today. Pray for me, good father, that, through you, a miserable sinner may find mercy in his last hour." At this I breathed again, and promised to do as he would have me. Then we walked on some way together, till they parted from me, and I reached the skirts of the wood, where sat my companion waiting. I could just stagger up to him, and then fell down at his side, shivering like a man with the ague. After some time I arose, and we went on our way. But I failed not, with strong inward groaning, to plead with the Lord for the poor outlaw, that he might find grace and escape damnation. *And, in sooth, I had so strong an assurance vouchsafed to me of God, that I could not doubt of his final salvation.*

And can one say this epoch was a failure? After all allowance has been made for the superstition, the intolerance, the ambition, and the immorality of certain of the clergy, there still remains the fact that for hundreds of years the church guided the search for God throughout Europe. Before it the older religions disappeared, and through it came a new spiritual awakening that was to have its part in the development of what we call Western civilization. For if one traces the boundaries of the lands within which this civilization came into being they will be seen to be almost precisely those of Latin Christianity. And back of all this development lies the ministration of the Christian church to the rank and file of the European peoples.

This religious influence still continues. Some of the great hymns are the bequest of the Middle Ages to the modern world. It was Bernard

of Clairbaux who gave us the great hymns, "O Sacred Head Now Wounded," and "Jesus the Very Thought of Thee," and "Jesus Thou Joy of Loving Hearts." Bernard of Cluny, of the twelfth century, gave us "For Thee, O Dear, Dear Country" and "Jerusalem the Golden." Our hymn books contain still other hymns from men like Abelard, Anatolius (of the seventh century), Fulvet of Chartres (tenth century), John of Damascus (eighth century), and many more. While these ancient hymns do not always express modern religious convictions, they carry forward the service of the medieval church as the center and inspiration of religious aspiration and Godhood. A search of various hymn books for examples of these early hymns will give one valuable glimpses into the religious experience of these centuries.

VIII. *The Protestant Churches as Means of Approach to God*

This conception of the church as indispensable to the religious life of the individual was carried over into the Protestant movement. But it naturally lost some of the elements of efficiency in the more radical anti-Catholic communions. In such religious bodies, as the Lutheran and the Anglican churches, the sacraments still continued to have something of their older significance, although the miracle of transubstantiation was denied. The faith of the individual believer gave the religious value to the Lord's Supper. In its celebration there was believed to be a participation in the divine life such as was not possible under other conditions. Similarly, too, certain Protestant bodies held to the necessity of baptism as a means of clearing the individual from the taint of original sin, thus making it possible for him to be saved. But in the Protestant movements of the seventeenth century the connection between the Catholic conception of the relation of the church and the individual was abandoned. The individual was justified by his faith alone, and this was believed to be conditioned by the grace of God. The church was a voluntary gathering, more or less organized and self-directing. It claimed no catholicity, but rather loyalty to the Bible. Note the following stanzas from a hymn of this period, "O Word of God Incarnate":

The Church from her dear Master
  Received the gift divine,
And still that light she lifteth
  O'er all the earth to shine.
It is the golden casket,
  Where gems of truth are stored;

It is the heaven-drawn picture
Of Christ, the living Word.

O make Thy Church, dear Saviour,
A lamp of purest gold,
To bear before the nations
Thy true light, as of old.
O teach Thy wandering pilgrims
By this their path to trace,
Till, clouds and darkness ended,
They see Thee face to face.

Its chief emphasis lay upon its instruction in good doctrine and the attendance upon preaching services. In many of these churches the congregations had no audible part in the prayer, not even saying the amen. They did, however, join in the singing of hymns. Read the following from George Herbert:

Let all the world in every corner sing
"My God and King!"
The heavens are not too high;
His praise may thither fly;
The earth is nott too loe;
His praises there may grow.
Let all the world in every corner sing
"My God and King!"

Let all the world in every corner sing
"My God and King!"
The Church with psalms must shout,
No door can shut them out;
But, above all, the heart
Must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in every corner sing
"My God and King!"

In the Calvinist line of churches religion consisted pretty largely in an acceptance of the confessions which assured the individual the correct doctrinal statement of his Christian faith. He could, with God's aid, receive sanctification and the maintenance of a moral life as far as possible removed from anything like frivolous pleasure, and the conduct of family religion. In the more extreme Protestant types the church has had a decreasing part in the religious life of Christians. Such a tendency was doubtless inevitable because of the revolt against the Catholic and the

state churches. Its effect has been in more recent times to minimize the religious significance of the church as a social institution, and, almost paradoxically, to emphasize the church as an agency of social culture.

IX. *Religious Experience through the Church in More Recent Protestantism*

It is only as one recognizes the institutional characteristics of the religious life that one can properly estimate the religious movements during the last two centuries. The period of the Reformation was a period of all but unceasing brutal conflict, filled with wars and persecutions. As we have already noted, the result was the elevation of correct theological belief as essential for communion of the soul with God. By the middle of the seventeenth century, however, this polemic tendency had very largely accomplished its end. Unfortunately, it had not only its benefits, but its injuries. The Christian was apt to think of his religion as primarily theological and ecclesiastical, and to minimize the emotional experience which is so important a part of religion. But this soon found expression, not so much, it is true, among the privileged classes as among the more lowly folk who found in their religion consolations of which more prosperous people hardly felt the need. The Wesleyan movement brought the ministration of the church home to the masses that the state church had rather neglected. The plain minds of Independents came to believe that the Christian churches should be composed only of those who had had conscious religious experience. But in each case the formation of groups for the maintenance of interest and enthusiasm for the gaining of special religious experience carried on rapidly. Indeed, such bodies are today by far the largest among the Protestants.

But it would be a mistake to think that this new interest in the evangelical community, and consequent evangelical experience, was limited to these new bodies. A new spirit came over all religious institutions, and in the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries we have a revival of Christian experience within the church. The great revivalists stimulated church activities, and thousands of Christians sang and continue to sing hymns which speak not only of the joys of experience, but also the regard for the Christian church. Some of these hymns are stately, like "I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord," a hymn which men have sung since 1800. Some of them were purely sentimental, like "The Little Brown Church in the Wildwood." The rather unpoetical hymns of Isaac Watts are losing somewhat in popularity just now, but for two hundred

years men have sung them as they have gathered for religious worship.

It is true that the Christian spirit is no longer limited to the churches for social expression, but it is within them that the spirit is educated. In fact, the function of the church seems to be as great in religion now as ever. Even though the conception of the religious life has been somewhat de-ecclesiasticized and extended to a range of interest fully as great as that of the Middle Ages, its primary function of setting up fellowship between God and man is still being performed.

The tendency on the part of certain intellectually centered persons to substitute a rather passive philosophy of religion for religious living has tended to separate them from churches where the emphasis has been much more on doctrinal statements than on liturgical worship, prayer, and religious exercises. For such minds the centering of the service on preaching as distinct from a ritual evokes an intellectual dissent unrelieved by any opportunity for emotional expression. The temptation is naturally, therefore, to break with an institution and to hold one's own doctrinal or philosophical system. But in the nature of the case this is an illogical position. Religion always involves group action, and as a social interest demands such self-expression, just as the interest in education demands schools. Reflection is undoubtedly an important and frequently determining element in a religious attitude; but after all, it does not express the total self, which is volitional and emotional as well as intellectual. Generally speaking, the persons who thus because of refusal to assent to a dominating theology separate themselves from religious institutions lose religious satisfaction and tend toward the substitution of religious philosophy for religious experience. This, of course, is not inevitable, but seems to follow the general social law that few persons can maintain active interest in a cause essentially social when they detach themselves from social organization.

Yet counter-movements in Christianity have always set up some sort of social organization. That has been one characteristic element of Protestantism. Whereas the church unity was maintained both by the Roman Catholic church and state churches and by political means, nonconformists of all sorts were organizing their little groups in order that they too might have the benefit that comes from association with those devoted to the same end. While of course it is to be admitted that this multiplication of religious bodies was attended by some evils, it is historically true that religious liberty came to Christendom through the multiplication of these religious sects, some of which grew into great denominations. In this tendency to find religious assistance in organized

group life we see simply a carrying forward of the fundamental characteristics of religion as distinct from religious philosophy. While of course it is true that every individual must be, as it were, solitary in the presence of God, it is quite as true that the motive to such solitariness comes largely through the association with others who are engaged in the same quest. The social organization of interests is thus not only helpful to the experience of the individual, but inevitable.

X. *Religious Experience through the Church in Modern Times*

Religion is as much a social institution today as ever before. However much men and women hesitate to bow to religious faith because of intellectual influence, when once they commit themselves to religious activity they feel the need of some group with which to co-operate and in which to gain a contact with the experience of the past and gratify their impulse to worship. It is of course true that there can be solitary religion, but it is largely a matter of personal equation. The great rank and file of people are not antisocial, and their social responses are as legitimately in need of satisfaction as any other elements of their nature. Just as one would not think of normal education without a school, or a normal state without a government, or a normal marriage without a home, so it is unnatural to think of religion without some form of organization. Human nature has not been experimenting with its capacities and necessities for millennia without results, and among these results is the religious group as an aid to the moral life. In common with all groups, the church conserves the values of the past. The overlapping of individuals in a religious organization makes such continuity of experience possible. Each generation is brought individually rather than *en masse* into the group, and is thus more or less deliberately initiated into those customs and beliefs which the past has preserved as vital to the welfare of religious life. Without this continuity of religious experience, this actual impact of personality upon personality, this growing participation of individuals in the institutional stream of experience, much of the richness of human experience would be dissipated. Particularly is this true in all human values which are not physical or subject to the conditions of time and space. The human response to love and to the sense of the value of human personality have been gained with too much difficulty to permit the loss of the social process in which they are carried.

In particular, the function of the church seems to be still what it has been in the past: first, it makes possible a fellowship between individuals and God through the means of group action (sacraments), group worship,

and group instruction; second, it endeavors to evoke in its members and those who are not its members the attitudes of Jesus; third, as a group it offers opportunity for the organization of these attitudes into activities, and so furnishes, as it were, a laboratory of morality that expresses these attitudes. In a word, it does for the religious life what any group does for those who are organizing their lives for specific ends.

XI. *The Method of Christian Fellowship*

The church and the home are designed to promote a precious fellowship. He who never experiences it, whether found in church or home or elsewhere, misses one of the greatest goods of life. But church and home should not monopolize this fellowship; rather they should be the nursery of it, where it is fostered and grows and whence it spreads out into other social groupings.

There are three kinds of association highly prized by men. All three can be found in the church at its best. We shall call the first sympathetic, the second instrumental, the third organic. The third kind is the best. It is described in the New Testament by such phrases as being members one of another, being branches of a single vine, or in such statements as: "Ye in me and I in you that ye all may be one." It is the rare and excellent kind of fellowship which constitutes the Kingdom of God. It does not exclude the sympathetic and instrumental types of association. On the contrary, it ought properly to include them; but it is more than they.

1. *Sympathetic and Instrumental Association*

Sympathy, taken in its original sense, means feeling together. Sympathetic association is one in which the people associated share the same feelings, the same thoughts, the same aspirations, the same hopes and purposes. A shared experience is deepened, sweetened, and intensified through the sharing of it. The psychology of this has been intensively studied and is now well understood. Each who has the experience acts as a stimulus on the others to intensify the feeling, if it is a feeling that is shared, or to make the thought more vivid and compelling, if it is a thought, to make the aspiration more absorbing and thrilling, if it is aspiration that is shared.

If it is a painful experience, such as a sorrow, a disappointment, a danger, the sharing of it somehow makes it sweet. Blessed are they that mourn if they mourn together as a beloved community, for in thus sharing the experience they shall be comforted. In sympathetic association there is a magic which transforms bitter grief or loss or disappointment

or tragedy into something precious. The fellowship of sympathy touches the evils of life, and by the magic of that touch it makes them yield a fragrance. They become beatitudes. Jesus was speaking, not to isolated individuals, but to a beloved community when he said: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad. For so persecuted they the prophets that were before you." Not only would they have fellowship with one another in this persecution, but also with the great prophets that went before them.

Yet, if a fellowship were merely sympathetic and nothing more, if it did nothing to remove the causes of grief and pain and disappointment, and if it did not constructively change the evil situation resulting from these causes, save only to sympathize, it would be an inadequate kind of association. Precious as sympathetic fellowship may be, taken by itself alone it is not sufficient. It ought to be an accompaniment of instrumental and organic association. It is like a climbing vine; it needs these others to provide the strong frame on which to climb.

Instrumental association might be called association for good works. It serves as an instrument for doing things. It does things which are helpful to its own members and to others. Almost all the charitable work of the church is of this sort. The church has sought to provide wholesome recreation, to improve education, to rectify some of the economic evils. It has applied itself as an instrument to fight the use of alcoholic liquors, to limit long hours of labor, to overcome corruption in politics, etc. It has also greatly improved its organization for helping its own membership in any time of need. All this belongs to the instrumental phase of association. It is so plain and simple and commonplace that it is probably the first thing which comes to the mind of anyone who considers the value of any association, whether in the church or outside.

2. *Organic Association*

Over against association for sympathy and association for service is association for personality-building. We call it organic. In organic association the members do not necessarily share the same feeling. Of course they may, and often do; but this sharing belongs to the sympathetic, not the organic, aspect of their association. If the association is organic, each must have, over and above the feelings he shares with others, those feelings which are the peculiar expression of his own unique individuality. But the members interact on one another in such a way as to intensify and vastly enrich the feeling of each, however different their feelings may be from one another. In this association they have thoughts which are

not shared. They may differ greatly in their ideas about things. But they interact on one another in such a way as to clarify and magnify the ideas of each. They have purposes and aspirations which are not shared; but they interact in such a way as to extend the scope and accuracy and effectiveness of the purpose and aspiration of each.

Nevertheless in organic association there is profound mutual understanding. While one does not think just as the others do, he knows what they do think. While one does not feel about things as the others, he knows how they feel. While he does not strive for the same end they may strive for, he knows what is the aspiration and striving of their lives. This deep mutual understanding is what makes their interaction in difference so helpful, so clarifying, and so creative. This stimulating interaction of diverse personalities who have profound mutual understanding of one another fosters and magnifies the individuality of each. Yet each unique individuality is organically and co-operatively connected with the others; just as the limbs of the human body, while totally different from heart, lungs, yet are so organically connected that each in its own unique diversity fulfils a function that nourishes, sustains, and enriches all the others. Thus individuals who enter into organic association with one another are members one of another. They are branches of a single vine. Each abides in the other that they all may be one.

This stimulating, sustaining, diversifying spiritual co-operation and mutual understanding need not exclude sympathy and service; but it is far more than they. It is the kind of fellowship Jesus and the disciples had with one another. These individuals were not all molded according to the same pattern. They did not come out of the process of fellowship like so many bricks, each thinking, feeling, saying, doing the same. Quite the contrary was the case. Under the stimulus of this fellowship each began to grow into a full-orbed individual. Each thought about matters in a different way; each felt differently, spoke differently, reacted differently. Yet each was so organically related to the others in profound mutual understanding, at least so long as Jesus was with them, that each fulfilled his own peculiar function and made his own valuable contribution. Each brought the whole group to a focus in himself, yet the focusing in each was very different from the others.

It should be noted that the early church was not primarily an instrumental association. It was not first of all devoted to service or good works. We do not find that it concentrated its efforts immediately on providing wholesome recreation, or fighting political corruption, or bringing justice into the economic system, or improving the schools, or opposing slavery, or doing any good works in marked degree except to dispense

charity. It was organic rather than instrumental. It was an association devoted to saving souls; that is, it fostered, enriched, and exalted the individualities of its members until these outcasts, these down trodden and crushed, these slaves and riff raff rose up in towering strength to dominate the age. Such magnified and developed personalities could and did, in the course of time, enter into instrumental association for the purpose of doing good works, removing causes of evil, transforming conditions, and reconstructing the world.

We do not mean to suggest that the church should refrain from good works. On the contrary, it should do even more than it is doing. It should be an instrumental association as well as organic. But first of all, we claim, it should be organic. Its first and greatest function in the world is to bring people together in such a way that they can interact in deep organic community, with profound mutual understanding. It should quicken to life and to abundant growth those impulses, aspirations, and personal attitudes wherein the individual comes to largest fulfilment of his utmost possibilities. This is individual salvation; but it is also profoundly social. The individual finds fulfilment through interaction with his fellows. And as he increases in spiritual stature his interaction becomes increasingly creative of greater personality in himself and others.

It should be noted that this kind of association does not exclude solitude. On the contrary, it requires seasons of solitary, private meditation and worship; for only in solitude can one assimilate the suggestions he has received from others. Only in solitary "waiting on God" can he organize the new impulses which association has stirred within him. He must digest what he has gathered. If he does not do this, he becomes superficial. He ceases to have originality. He becomes incapable of interacting creatively. His capacity for association sinks to the level of the sympathetic and the instrumental. Only as seasons of solitary, private assimilation and organization alternate with seasons of association can his interaction with others serve to develop the powers and possibilities of himself and his associates. Only so can he participate in organic association.

3. *Organic Association as Adjustment to God*

Organic association is the most profoundly religious kind of association. Through it the individual and the group share most fully in the cosmic working of God. There is a cosmic process which works to make the whole universe more organic. It is God. It works to develop individuals, both human and subhuman; and it works to interrelate these

individuals so that they all can be members one of another, each in diversity fulfilling a function of vital importance to all the others, each sustaining the others and magnifying them, and in so doing finding itself most richly nourished and magnified. Trees and grass and sky and water and earth and beasts and men become increasingly interdependent and mutually supporting. The goal of this movement toward organic interdependence and mutual development of individuals is poetically expressed in the words: "The lion shall lie down with the lamb." The ultimate value of all good works and instrumental service is to provide conditions which are favorable to this work of God—the development of organic interaction between all men and between men and the rest of the universe.

4. *The Personal Experiment*

The personal experiment which we propose consists in the individual participating in the associations and activities of the church in such a way as to find or achieve the kind of fellowship we have called organic. The personal technique by which this is accomplished is too subtle, intimate, and variable to put into any set of rules or to describe to another. But certain suggestions can be made to guide the experiment.

One should occasionally take time to look back over his experience and examine himself to ascertain whether he has actually attained this fellowship in some measure. He should endeavor to discover and cultivate in himself those attitudes, that way of approaching and dealing with people, talking and listening to them, which will enable him to enter into organic association with them. Above all, he should have seasons of solitude and private worship to use in the way previously described.

If one earnestly seeks this most precious fellowship we believe he can find it. It will grow with him through the years, transforming the world for him and making all things more dear. Through it he enters into organic fellowship with God who works to make the universe more organic. Through organic fellowship with men and beasts and things a man finds God and lives in God and God in him. It is necessary to the best religion; it is indispensable to Christianity.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Through what type of organization did early peoples create a social approach to religion?
2. What more expansive background was developed among the Hebrews?
3. What part in individual religious experience did the Hebrew ritual play?
4. What psalms have you found apart from those suggested which extol the temple or the ritual as means of approach to God?

5. What abuses crept in when a once helpful ritual was carried to an extreme?

6. What relation did Jesus hold to the organized religious associations of his time, as the synagogue and temple?

7. What new associations did he foster, and what were their functions?

8. What customs in the early church contained the germ of the church as organized today?

9. How did contact with the non-Jewish world modify the early church?

10. Give the characteristics of the church in the Middle Ages.

11. How was the sacrament of communion regarded?

12. What did people expect from baptism?

13. What relation did the development of pageantry, art, music, architecture in connection with religion bear to the condition of the people?

14. What are some of the items of our religious debt to the church in this period?

15. Why would you say that a hymn book was a good source from which to gain religious impressions of a period?

16. What were some of the changes in religious organization which Protestantism brought?

17. What was the contribution of the Protestant revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries?

18. In what three ways does our author feel that the church fosters religious experience?

19. What two types of association underlie the ministry of the church to personal religion? Describe each of them.

20. What suggestions can you make through which one may increase his religious experience through the fellowship of the church?

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